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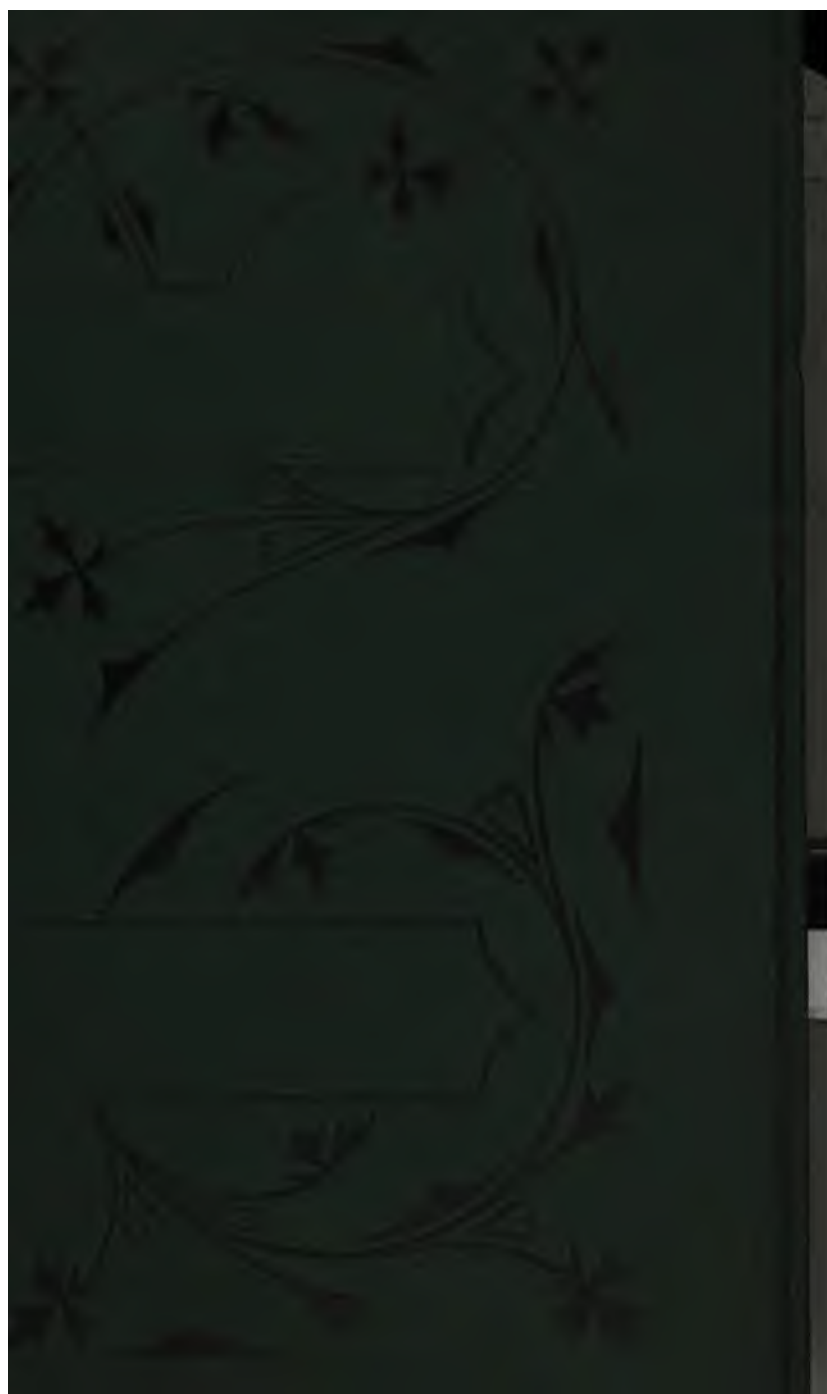
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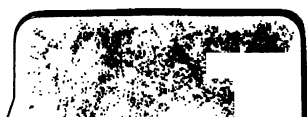
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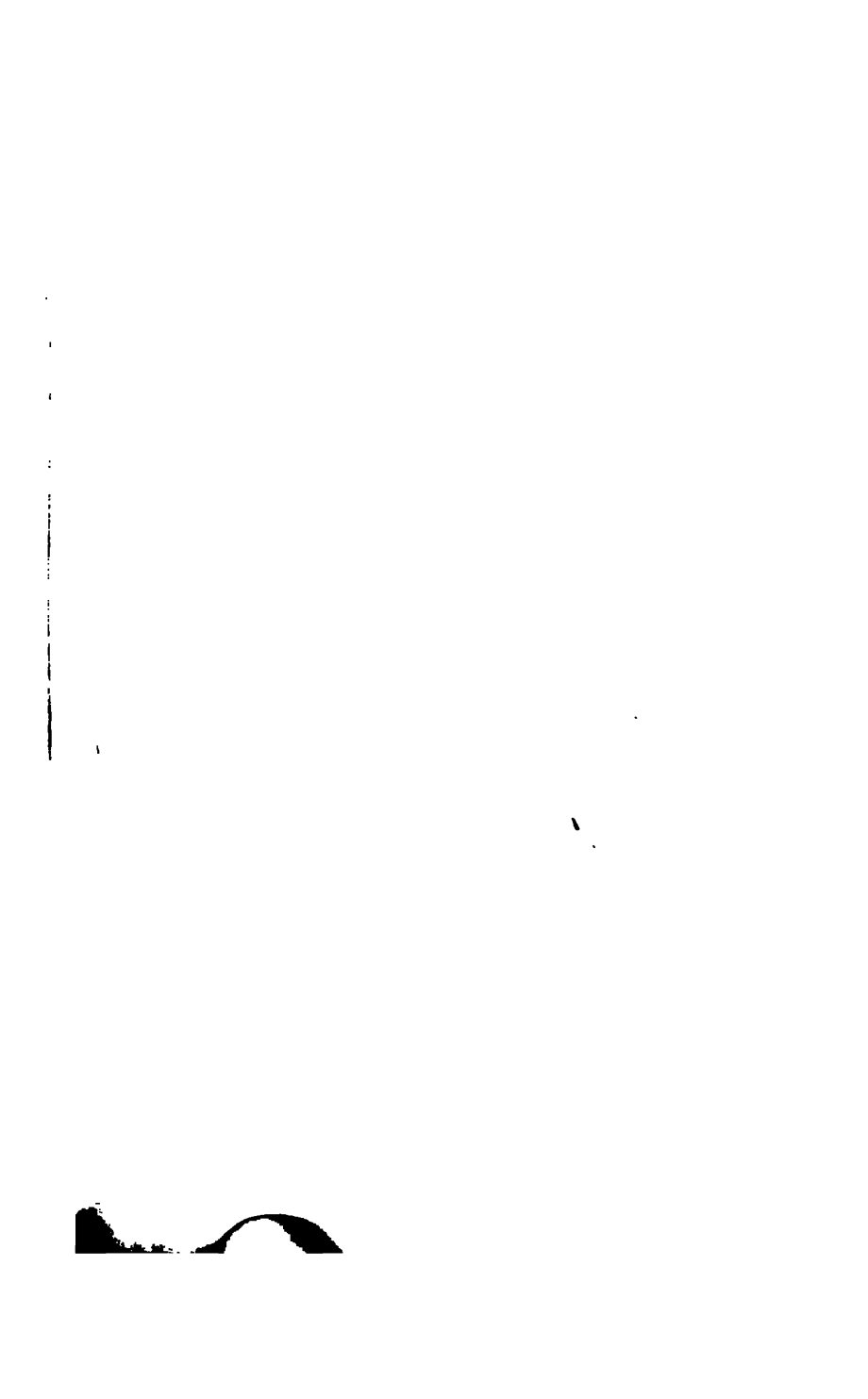
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THE EMIGRANT'S WIFE.

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VOL. II.



THE EMIGRANT'S WIFE;

OR,

ONE IN TEN THOUSAND.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

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1871.

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ONE IN TEN THOUSAND.

CHAPTER I.

OH dear ! what consummate idiots very young men are !—boys of two or four-and-twenty—(though, for that matter, some are idiots and boys at two or four and forty). To see their vanity ! If a woman only laughs with them, or blushes before them, or so much as giggles in their august presence, she is straightway in love with them ! How these fellows, when they come to their senses and their thirties, and real attractions, laugh at their former selves ! Upon my veracity Chartres, with his leather strap round his waist, and in his Crimean shirt sleeves and digging boots, was almost frightened. He, once or twice, almost found himself wonder-

ing whether Wilkins was a jealously inclined fellow or not, and was anything but quite comfortable until John returned and sat down for a time, when he found that Margaret became even worse than ever. The blushes and the finger twisting, or rather diamond and emerald ring turnings of that kind-hearted lady ; the number of times she moved in her seat ; the varied poses she took ; and the smiling head-shakings she was guilty of, were wonderful ! For a stranger to have passed judgment on her conduct that morning, the verdict would have been “she is a thoroughly vain and flighty woman ;” but her old friend knew all about her and her motives after the first half-hour of trepidation on his part. Chartres, the gentleman, the handsome young fellow, with his great taste for female beauty—hadn’t he confessed his taste a dozen times in England to her—was there to see the great change for the better in his friend ! Why shouldn’t she show him all those new graces and lady-like airs which she had been so assiduously learning of the dancing master, ever since fortune had smiled on the poor couple’s hard labour ?

Why should she not let him see that she—being a clever woman—had been learning a little French, and a good deal of music and poetry since the old depressed days in London?

Margaret and her husband had regularly, evening after evening, after their daily toil, sat down like school-children to their tasks, under the guidance of some digging friend, until their first two years in the colony had passed. And they had studied well, and were still working with the children's governess. Yes; and the governess being one who formerly had seen better days, the energetic adult female pupil had learned the art of lady-like deportment from a good teacher. And the new graces were there; and the fine clothes, and the long words, and even the French phrases; and here was an opportunity of showing the difference between the English Margaret Wilkins and the Australian one—the well-to-do gentleman's wife; for wealthy shopkeepers rank high in the colonies, and the lady of the Kooroc-aboolshire councillor and J. P. of the territory of Victoria. Margaret was proud of the new Mr. Wilkins, as

proud as a loving wife could be. He was a pushing man, and in her estimation stood second to none in the land ; and she respected him.

Before Chartres left the house that evening, he almost felt that he was now the plebeian, and Wilkins the gentleman, so vast was the change which three years of success in a democratic community had made in the quondam corn-dealer.

Chartres stayed and took tea with his friends that evening. Wilkins was really concerned for him. " I'll tell you what, Mr. Chartres, I buy here for the bank of Victoria, and I ought to know on what ground a man has the best chance. I hear mostly everything that is to be heard ; and I'll be bound I'll find you a mate before Tuesday night."

And hearing this, Chartres went away to his bed a happier man, perhaps, than he had been since the first week after his own, and the first day after his own family's arrival in the colony. Hope ! Why, doesn't the thought even of a good dinner make a man, under the divine influence, a happy being for

the time? Much less—but we all know what the new gold seeker hopes!

Here is the epistle from the lady of the house in Melbourne. “Oh! William, how very cruel of you not to write! you promised most faithfully that I should hear from you every day; and yet—but I won’t say anything more to blame you, my own kind husband.” Of course Chartres did not have any opportunity of sending a letter home while he was on the mountain bridle-path. He should have thought of this before promising to send home letters while on the road. “My poor headache is still very bad. I sometimes at night, when I fancy you may be lying ill all alone in the bush, feel as if it would be an inexpressible relief to have the top part of my head lifted off, so as to let my poor brain swell with its load of anxiety. Then I have to get up and wake the children, to get them to talk to me, and I make them tell me how they think you are. Perhaps God really gives them power to know about you. At all events the darlings always comfort me by saying, ‘Papa is asleep now. He will soon bring us home plenty of gold.’

And then, my darling, I feel calmer for a time; for if their prophecy about your bringing home the gold is true you cannot be in danger. Talk about an occasional separation being pleasant! Ah! my love, what a misery it is to me to be away from you in the best of times, much less when you are in trouble. God alone knows what your poor Lucy suffers in your absence! O, what kind of love is this of ours? Is it more pleasure or pain-giving than that of others? Sometimes I think, yes; sometimes, no. Now you are away again from us I find what I believed impossible, that my love for you has actually grown more absorbing than ever. What a happy, happy creature I am when I think that your love has become so too, for one so unworthy as I! I never, never cease thinking about you day or night, alone or in company I am enveloped by your image. Ah! when am I to be with you again?"

And here follow pages more. "Annie Short wrote to me yesterday asking whether you had arrived safely at the diggings; but I am ashamed to answer her yet—to let her

know that you have been such a long time without writing to me. Mr. Crowley, Junior, called last evening and was very kind. He brought a lot of passion-fruit for me; how did he know I was fond of them? And he was quite complimentary, Sir; he had the assurance to say he had told you that I was the prettiest woman in the colony. Do you remember him saying that? Papa is still at Drummond's; and what do you think he is doing? Experimentalising on meat-preserving for the European markets. He says that if he succeeds, he and you can make a fortune in a year or two. There, my darling! Fancy dear old blind 'Pappy' making a fortune for us! His sight too is better, especially in the right eye. Wasn't it very wonderful that he should have had a change for the better, after his attack of eye-blight last hot weather? If he were to see well again, just fancy! So here is a lot of good news for you, and I hope you have plenty for me."

This is by no means all of Lucy's letter though; but it will serve to show what sort of correspondence this young couple—now

an old married one—kept up. I was about to remark that the letter might help to show what kind of affection they had for each other ; but no writing could do this, least of all a wife's love-letter, which is so twaddling to everyone but her husband.

Lucy wondered what sort of love theirs was, and well she might. It was no every day love, but one wonderful in its kind, wonderful in its intensity, wonderful, thrice wonderful, in its duration. It should lead either to lasting joy or to lasting sorrow. I don't think Chartres was made a more-manly being by it though. I fancy if he had cared for his wife less, he would have cared the more for himself, and through himself for his family too. He would have been, in every respect harder hearted, as he should have been. When Lucy was not happy, he was surrounded by a world of gloom. And men like this are not likely to fight their way very well under adverse circumstances. All William's successes were valued according to their powers of making his wife and family happy. Very good ; but not exactly a sublunar standard of measurement. How-

ever he and she loved as they loved, they couldn't alter, nor would they even if they could. Even mortal affection can be carried to excess; though I don't know whether I can have any hope to make women believe this doctrine.

That night of receiving his wife's letter, Chartres sat or rather knelt down by his bedside with a board as a desk, and wrote to the poor little woman in Melbourne for whose sake he was now undergoing so many troubles, a long account of all his adventures. I won't give his epistle, or even an extract from it. Faugh! who would care to read a namby-pamby letter of affection from a husband to a lawful wife! If indeed it had been to somebody else's wife, the case would be different. But such is human nature; and I try at all events—even if I don't succeed—to describe it. No doubt it is very nice and proper to write about people as they might be; I try to write about them as they are. A gentleman, well known as a poet in England and America, who was so good as to peruse my "bantling" told me, "You have perfectly succeeded, if

realisation be your aim. You have hit the mark. But remember that there is such a thing in art as being too real." Is there in all kinds of art? My readers will, I trust, think that there is *not*.

CHAPTER II.

MURMURINGS at any time, from twelve to two a.m. ; a drunken tumble on the floor about three ; and thereafter any amount of snortings and chokings until half-past four o'clock from Chartres' five bedroom mates. He was too sleepy to take note of anything besides the phenomena described ; and when the cocks—of which there were plenty on the diggings—crew their salutations to this Sunday morning's advent, Chartres got up and walked out into the cold mountain morning air to see his new place of residence. It was the beginning of December now, just the last of the Spring, which had been a long and wet one, and consequently the forest looked its very best, and the hills and their productions were at their gayest.

Water is a more attractive feature in Aus-

tralian landscape than it is in most other habitable parts of the world. How pleasant it was to Chartres, this lovely morning, to find not quite a mile over the hill, behind which the township was laid out, a lake of sweet water, fed by an ever running mountain stream. Talk of the bleakness of an Australian view, of the leaden colour of all its trees, its songless birds and odourless flowers ! Nonsense ! We are accustomed to the scenery of an old continent, whose very forests are not primeval. Who can say that the Black Forest of Germany, or the woods of Switzerland and the Apennines have not once been cultivated ground ? Who can say that even the valley of the Amazon for ages had not been tilled ? The same doubt about India ; the same about Africa exist. Australia is the only country in the world which we are sure has never been inhabited by any but savage men. Its forests are in a state of nature, as its soil is. Talk about the vegetation of Europe ! Are not its very timber trees culled from different habitats, one good kind from among a hundred bad. Who would plant useless timber ? Have not those

culled trees become more beautiful and useful still, through cultivation? In Australia, nature wears her rough primeval dress; she gives us her unsightly gifts rugged and plain; but yet she gives us lovely scenes withal. Look at the matchless beauty of the dells and flats among volcanic ranges; here the fostering soil has been washed down from the hills, and here from this nature's cultivation, her vegetation is its loveliest. The very birds choose these spots to dwell in; and here, too, even the butterflies abound in all their beauty.

When our friend had taken a bath, eked out with a plentiful allowance of soap, to get rid of the road-dust, he sauntered round the lake. What gigantic trees, what glorious ferns, what tall and beautiful grasses of many kinds! No songless birds! Listen to that bell-bird, with its notes just like a silver bell; and those soldier-birds, with their strange chatterings; and here is a flock of love-birds twittering and "creek-creeking" merrily as they settle on the highest boughs; and (can it be true?) here is a robin, a scarlet-breasted little thing, that settles quite close to a man,

and seems to know no fear, just like its English namesake. There is a dozen of black and white crows on the ground, and wonderful to hear, each bird seems to have half-a-dozen different songs—all pretty, although short. And what is that laughing, as if its sides must ache? Chartres knows it must be the laughing-jackass; and he listens to it and laughs too. Ah! my friends, you plump little quails, come down for your morning draught, look out! There is your ruthless enemy, the wedge-tailed eagle; he, too, is here for his drink, just as well as those diggers' goats with the little long-tailed fly-birds standing on their backs, are.

No flowers? Why, didn't Banks christen part of the country Botany Bay from their abundance? It would take up too much space even to name the pretty ones among them. Some of the trees—large ones too—seem all flowers; and here, on this stony patch, which in Europe wouldn't grow a weed, there is a regular forest of flame and incense, a forest of yellow-blossoming acacias, whose flowers are so plentiful that they actually conceal the leaves and stems. And the

perfume! match it if you can in any other country. Rimmel, the perfumer, knows something about this, since he has introduced its essential oil under the name of Australian Wattle scent. Here, farther up the gully among the rocks themselves, although in mixed volcanic soil it is true, is another grove of—what? Why musk trees, large trees, not having the sickly heavy smell of the animal matter, but with a refreshing ethereal perfume all their own. Chartres plucked down a bough, broke it just as if it were only a common white or scarlet myrtle tree, and kept it to perfume his room with. I cannot mention half the beautiful things he met with in this one spot by the lake. True, it is a favoured spot, and all the rest of the country is not like it; but the good must be taken with the bad. It is not fair to describe any place by its bad features alone. We have our gardens in England filled with trees and flowers, that have beauty and perfume, and they are collected from every country under the sun, and planted by man because of their worth. But some large countries don't naturally yield more than one or two

of these valuables. How many of them are indigenous to England I wonder? And because the *majority* of our Australian wild-flowers have no perfume, the bush is said to be odourless! I believe that decried Australia can show a greater number of blossoms, valuable either for beauty or perfume, than any other country, Brazil perhaps excepted.

Eight o'clock is breakfast time; and Chartres is back just as his fellow-lodgers are sitting down to their meal. It is laid out on a long deal table in the common room, and bare forms are the seats. There are sixteen eaters all told;—namely, eleven lodgers, the landlord, his wife, his son and daughter, (one a young man, the other a “slip of a girl” of fourteen), and the servant. Beefsteaks and onions—they announced themselves up the street; cold lamb, plenty of chops, bacon, and hot potatoes, good bread and butter, and abundance of tea and milk. This is the bill of fare. The table has a cloth on it, though a brownish one; and the knives and forks are not scrupulously bright; but there is a sufficiency of them, and of crockery of all kinds. The company is orderly enough, very nearly

as quietly spoken as a company of artizans in London; and to tell the truth, most of them are rather subdued this morning, as last night was Saturday night.

Here I am afraid my English friends will be angry with me, and wrathfully repudiate my description of an Australian digging lodging-house. They have been accustomed to the highly spiced narratives of either the first gold fever times, when all the ruffianism which could find its way across the ocean, and a good deal of the same thing already in the land, were seething and bubbling together; or else they remember scenes made up by the "*arm-chair travellers*," who even now talk of bowie-knives and revolvers in the best streets of Melbourne and Sydney. I don't know that it won't make this chapter too tame, when I say that not a single one of these diggers here possesses any weapon of greater offence than the useful pick and shovel.

The times are vastly different from the old days. When the law is now broken on the diggings, it must be broken by stealth, as everywhere else. In the old days it was set at naught openly. Now there is but little

opportunity for the thief ; for there are gold-buyers and branch banks everywhere ; and the digger takes his week's " washings " to Mr. Wilkins's, or some other store, and sells it, instead of keeping it in his tent, and protecting it *vi et armis*. A good deal of crime is still to be found on new rushes ; but it is mostly stealthy theft. Drunkenness there is, galore ; but all acts of violence are surprisingly rare ; and so effective is the protection of the law afforded by the police and mounted troopers, that a woman may live alone in safety, with no other better guard round her than a calico tent. There is certainly a free and easy mannerism about the denizens of a new rush which is not to be found elsewhere. Jack on the gold-fields is as good as his master—and better ; and he thinks it, no doubt, a very fine and independent thing to interlard his speech with expletive adjectives. Oddly enough, too, these adjectives are those which are much affected by sailors. The voyage from Europe has *nauticalised* the Australians a good deal ; even the women talk of south-westerly and north-easterly winds ; and if they can read at all, know what latitude means.

"Well, mate," says the landlord, a black-bearded, fierce-looking Dublin man, but who is in reality as gentle as an infant, "I hope you have a good appetite. Sit down here and eat your breakfast."

Chartres does so. He eschews the beef-steak and onions ; but tries the chops, greasy as they are. The landlady pours out the tea ; while the daughter and the servant-girl help her in sundry ways. Not that they walk about attending ; each man helps himself when he can reach what he desires, and when he can't a neighbour passes it to him. The conversation does not become general until breakfast is nearly finished ; for hungry men are silent ones. Chartres is hungry enough and eats heartily, though he can't help comparing the table and cookery with his own scrupulously neat and well ordered meals.

"There is plenty of water about here if there is only the gold to find," Chartres remarks to his host.

"Aye, too much of it," a digger styled Scotty Wallace, answers. Nearly every man in the company has a nick-name. This is

the law on diggings and nobody kicks against it.

"How is that?" asks Chartres.

"Why half our time is taken up pumping."

"Yes, by Jingo," interrupts another man, "I'd rather have to cart the wash-dirt a mile or two, as we was obliged to do up at Gypsey Gully nigh Dunolly, than have to break one's heart pumping all day as we must here."

"Is there no way of draining a claim up on these hills?" is the innocent inquiry of Chartres.

But this question only gets for an answer a shout of laughter. Even the women smile.

"My word!" the host's daughter says, "you haven't been a digger long, have you?"

"No;" is the reply, "this is my first trial."

"Then I'll bet a note," a little sleepy-looking fair man, just opposite Chartres, says emphatically, and looking round on the company, "I say I'll lay a pound that he'll find something worth while."

"How do you know that, Foxey Sam?" some one inquires.

"It's always so I tell you," is the answer, with all the dogmatism of fatalistic belief.

"Don't the new chums that has worked only a few days always find more than the poor devils that's striving all their lives?"

"Well, there's a good deal in that, Foxey," the host and several others assent.

There is, in gold hunting, all the excitement and a good deal of the superstition connected with gambling, and it is a received axiom among many diggers that new hands are lucky.

"Aye," cries Foxey Sam, who by the way is the discoverer of this very rush, "look at that fellow there last week. He was only about a month in the colony, and he comes up here, he and his mate takes up a claim where nobody but himself would have "sunk," and drops on a fifty-three pound nugget besides nearly a pound weight of gold to the load."

There is a subdued moan round the table, and everybody looks covetously at Chartres' trim face and white hands.

"I declare too," Foxey continues, "I had to tell them poor devils what to do. They didn't know no more than the child unborn. When they got down about three feet, what do you think they began doing?"

"Go on, Foxey, and tell us. What do you want us to tell lies for?" is the encouraging remark.

"They actually began washing up!"

"Phew!" says the landlord. "Why this gentleman would know better than that I'll be bound."

"Upon my word," this gentleman confesses, very much abashed, "I don't think I should. I don't know the wash-dirt from any other earth, except I should see the specks of gold in it."

Foxey Sam fixes his ferret eyes on the last speaker, as if he would read his very soul. Then he gives the table a blow.

"You wouldn't know the wash-dirt, Mister—do you mean to say that?"

"I do indeed, and I'm on the look out for a mate that does know something," is the meek answer.

"Well," and here the host returns to the

narration, "Foxey had to tell them to go on sinking—"

"Stop with your sinking!" cries Foxey. "Here is a man as good as them and better, looking for a mate." He turns towards Chartres, "You want a mate you say, Mister? I'll buckle on with you to-morrow morning if you like."

The man could not have been more eager to secure Chartres' help if the latter were a living divining-rod, and Chartres is really glad to have the assistance of one who appears so experienced a miner.

"Agreed, mate?" asks Foxey, while Chartres thinks.

"Agreed!" cries Chartres, and so the bargain is struck.

It is wonderful after this to see the estimation in which the formerly degraded new chum is held.

"But go on," says Chartres, "and tell us about the fortunate new diggers."

"Well, I had to tell 'em to go down sixteen or eighteen foot more. But mind you, this wasn't all. Before they got down ten foot it was the greatest mercy the shaft

didn't fall in on 'em, it was sunk so crooked. I told 'em how to shore it, and then they went at it again. Well, they came to the wash-dirt; and there on the top of it was the fifty-three pound nugget! and I'm blessed if I couldn't have stole it!"

"How?" asks a big red-haired digger anxiously.

"Why this-a-way. I was standing by the old cove when he drew it up in the bucket, thinking it was a bit of stone, and throwing it down along with the rest of the top-dirt.

"'Mate,' says I, 'that last bucketful looks as if you was come to the wash-dirt.'

"'Does it?' says he, quite innocent. 'Is that the earth we shall have to wash out? It's uncommon heavy at all events.'

"With that I goes over to where he had thrown it, and takes out my knife and stoops down to fossick among it. The first thing I scraped against was the stone as we thought, and I pushed it aside with my hand, when the weight—by golly! wasn't I all of a tremble!" Even now Foxey quivers at the recollection.

"Curse me!" Red-head cries, "if I wouldn't have said nothing about—" and hereupon the speaker leaving his sentence to be guessed at, suddenly jerks out, "Go on, Foxey," and Foxey goes on.

"What do you stop a fellow for that-a-way? But I sees it in a minit, and—like a honest man as I am, though I ain't afeard or ashamed to say so—I goes up to the fellow and—for I couldn't speak mind you I was that trembling—I touches him on the shoulder and brings him over to the lump of gold. We both knelt down and cleaned it, what do you think of that, boys?" This is a theatrical point, this final question. Foxey Sam has the "gift of the gab."

Chartres, who now hears this narrative for the first time, cries out eagerly "Go on."

"Well, the cove fell all of a shake, like I was myself, only a good bit worse; and he goes down on his marrow-bones and puts his two hands together this way," (imitating a child crying), "and speaks to himself. Then he goes to lift the light stone, as it appears to him; and my word! to see the way he

looked at me when he finds it was half a hundredweight—a little thing so heavy! I offered to help him, but he wouldn't let me; but suddenly he shouts out 'Charley, Charley, Chawley!'—you know the way the cockneys does. And sits down on it and hollows out 'Chawley, Chawley,' agin. Then the young one scrambles up the rope, and runs to him, and my word! to see him! Blest if he didn't take off his hat and go down on his knees like the other; and then the old fellow kisses his son, and the son kisses him: and then the *ruxions* began! All the fellows came running to see what was up!"

"I hear they that found the gold was gentlefolk at home, come out here to make their fortune," the landlord remarks.

"That may be," says Foxey Sam; "but if they hadn't been new chums, they might have gone home with as much more as they found."

"How so?" asks Chartres.

"This-a-way. They might have kept it to themselves that they had struck on a new *lead* (a vein of gold), and after they had worked out their claim, taken up the ground

next it. But bless you, before an hour, all the ground around for nigh quarter of a mile was pegged out. However, the two coves took their nugget and sold their chance of the rest of the claim for six hundred pounds that morning, and went away."

"And what was their nugget worth?" Chartres asks eagerly.

"Three pounds eighteen an ounce—"

—"Which amounts to two thousand four hundred and eighty pounds eight shillings!" the voice of somebody coming out of a sleeping room cries cheerfully. A well-known voice, and a gentleman's, rough and hearty as it is—Masham's!

"That's it my hearty!" the host cheerily cries as to a favourite guest; "leave '*Japan*' to reckon up a thing agen the world!"

Masham has already been christened *Japan*, from his having lately been in that country, and related its wonders.

"Masham!" cries Chartres, upsetting his cup of tea as he starts up.

"Chartres, old boy! So you are a bachelor again? But they are all well at home, I trust?" he asks, as eagerly as if he were the

children's favourite uncle rather than a favourite acquaintance merely.

"Yes; thank the fates they are, Ned."

"Thank God, Will, for it; and don't be ashamed who hears you," says Masham, so loudly as to be heard by everybody.

Masham has all the air of those happy-go-lucky fellows who are always the kings among whatever company they happen to be in. If he chose to stand upon the table and deliver an oration against swearing, it is easy to see that none of his audience, who knew him, would venture to ridicule him. He is dressed in the usual Crimean shirt and belt—the diggers' costume now that the old red and blue Jerseys are no more. His beard has grown considerably, and he is stouter than formerly; but he cannot be said to look better as regards beauty. Poor Ned never laid any claim to being handsome; at all events, he is now, if anything, even more hearty than ever, and at the moment, one would fancy he had never known a care.

The two friends go out for a stroll, and leave the new partner of Chartres to con-

gratulate his superstition on having secured a bona-fide white-handed new chum to bring him luck.

"How is Short, and his Annie? Fine woman! and so struck with Mr. Chartres, people used to say."

"Ned—I thought you had more sense."

"'Pon my honour, so people did say."

"Masham, if you don't want to offend a friend, and to destroy the reputation of as good a woman as ever lived, don't, even in jest, talk that way."

"Come, old fellow, you know I have only been joking. Positively, I don't believe my mind has got rid of my Japanese course of ethics yet. I wish we were in Melbourne, old fellow; and a few days in your good little home would bring me round again," Ned says thoughtfully.

Could any man be really bad who could talk in this way?

And now Chartres relates his experiences. The sixty pound puzzles Masham exceedingly for a time. "But," says he, "it is old Crowley for a hundred pounds."

"I don't think so."

"Then who *can* it be, Will?"

"Give me your word of honour, Ned, not to mention names to anybody; and, above all, to think the worse of nobody if I tell you whom I guess it to be."

Ned, of course, gives his word.

"Then I think it must be Mrs. Short."

"Phew!" Masham whistles; "and you were so angry when I said people spoke of her liking you."

"For heaven's sake, Masham, stop that folly! I give you my sacred word of honour that I believe the woman to be as good and pure as an angel; and all the better and purer to help a poor devil for the sake of his wife and children."

But Ned makes no remarks on this. Whatever his private thoughts may be, he has sense enough to keep them to himself.

The two friends have plenty to talk about until dinner-time comes round; and each of them discusses his plans with the other, that is to say—one of them does; for Masham has no particular views of any sort, therefore he doesn't discuss them.

"I wish to heaven I was a doctor!" Ned

says, sighing, as if his not being one were the cause of his earthly ruin.

“Is that the last out, Ned?” Chartres slyly inquires. He remembers well enough one half-year’s wishing of Ned’s to be a squatter, with lots of sheep and cattle; another six months’ of craving to be an artist, or an author; and again, a turn at regretting not being an architect and surveyor, or something in the Peto, Brassey and Betts line. Ned’s last wanderings to Japan and China had been pursued in the determination to be a military adventurer.

“Why can’t you be content with what you are, Ned? Sit down with me here in the quiet bush for six months every evening, and I think I know enough nautical astronomy to pass you for your master’s certificate. The ‘seamanship’ subjects you can read up with some one else. I’ll be bound you’ll find some broken down or adventurous naval officer on the diggings if you only look out for one.”

Ned gives another great sigh. “I wish to the gods I could only settle down to it.”

“And why can’t you? You, too, who

seem to have friendly interest enough in England in the seafaring line."

"Yes; interest enough. But bother it, Will! Let us set our wits and arms to work, and try and find a ready-made fortune under our feet here."

Here is the old way of keeping off any remarks concerning his own private history. It is, perhaps, as strange a thing as any in this book, that a talkative young "devil-may-care" fellow, such as Masham is, should never make—even to one whom he has so often called his best friend—any confessions as to his family interest. Chartres several times had invited his confidence on the subject, thinking that perhaps he might be able to advise him out of some difficulty. But the other had never once responded; on the contrary, he had always shown that the subject was distasteful, if not painful to him.

The guesses of the women, Annie Short and Lucy Chartres, who knew him intimately, were absurd enough and contradictory, according to his behaviour at each of his visits. There was one thing, however, which had

long ago been agreed upon by acclamation between the two females, namely, that he was by birth a gentleman. His education—at least the more solid portion of it—had evidently been neglected. But for all that, he could speak some foreign languages, and play the flute and piano very nicely ; and he was a bit of a poetaster and opera-critic as well. And thus he passed very well in a drawing-room. Whatever he had done, even if it were intrinsically wrong, it was very certain that he had been well enough behaved since Chartres had known him.

CHAPTER III.

THIS evening Chartres takes Masham to supper at Mr. Wilkins'; and, by the way, I should mention that the former had now received both his swag and his two boxes of books and clothes which had been forwarded from Melbourne. Masham has some changes of clothing with him; so the two men are able to appear this Sunday evening in gentlemanly apparel, thus to delight the heart of the effect-loving Mrs. Wilkins beyond bounds.

"Well, Chartres," says Wilkins, faintly patronising. This is the first time he has ever left out the 'Mr. ;' he wouldn't do so just now had Chartres been in his old position in Melbourne. But Margaret had told him Chartres' account of his poverty; and here he is—an alluvial digger! Human

nature is proverbially given to honouring itself ; and can we blame the successful store-keeper, magistrate, and member of the shire-council of Kooroc-abool ?

The quick-eyed wife looks hard at Chartres when her lord addresses him ; but not a muscle of his face moves.

“ Well, Chartres, I think I have found you a good mate. He’ll be over at your place at daylight to-morrow ;” thus Wilkins.

“ Thank you,” Chartres answers ; “ who is he ?”

“ An old experienced hand, and one I know well. A man of good character, and one who has seen better days too.”

“ He is not so fortunate as you then, Wilkins ; for you have never done that, you lucky fellow.”

This is a little correction for the pompous tone, rather than for the name without the “ handle,” which Chartres, with his vilely sarcastic attributes, can’t, for the life of him, avoid saying.

Margaret blushes scarlet, and glances at Masham and her husband, and “ hems !” a bit. Though Chartres turns it off by saying, “ and

please Providence, you and I Wilkins will see better times still."

"I hope so, old fellow," is the frank answer ; and the wife perceives that there is peace.

"And why won't you want a mate now?" Wilkins asks, upon Chartres telling him he did not require a partner. "Is this gentleman one?"

Chartres explains the case to him ; and asks advice.

"Well, I don't see anything against your working with Sam, if you keep a bright look out. But recollect that he is one of the sharpest fellows on the rush—people all say so—and he will certainly *do* you if he can."

"The scoundrel !" cries Chartres ; "if he be that sort of fellow !" —

"Look you here, Chartres," Wilkins says, putting his thumbs into his waistcoat arm-holes ; "you are not in Melbourne now, nor will you, at work anywhere, be as you are in this room, among gentlefolk only. This fellow is one of the best diggers up here, a hard worker, and one who knows all the likely ground round about. Never mind his

virtuous intentions, or his want of them, but mind yourself and your own interests, and take his assistance without grumbling."

Masham and Mrs. Wilkins all this time have been talking together on various feminine-chosen subjects of conversation. Chartres now joins in.

"You have not yet let me see my old friend Jemima," he says to Mrs. Wilkins.

"I don't think she is very well this evening, poor child; and wouldn't care to be agitated."

"Not well, Margaret?" says Wilkins in astonishment; "she was well enough an hour ago. Of course, she will be only too glad to see Mr. Chartres, her old favourite."

Margaret blushes a good deal hereupon, and sits no longer in her rocking-chair, as if she was reclining in a barouche at the park.

"If you particularly want it, my dear, I will order her in," she says stiffly.

This is a perfect puzzle to Wilkins, and to Masham too, though in a minor degree. I don't think it is one to Chartres though. At all events, he guesses that all the unwillingness to let Jemima be produced arises from

a fashionable desire to keep all grown-up children out of sight. Jemima, by this time, is as tall as her mother, and how can a mother conveniently play the "girl" before a daughter as big as herself?

"Don't, pray my dear madam,"—(here is an ultra-fashionable phrase for the lady's gratification)—"pray don't ask her to come in if she is at all nervous," Chartres begs.

"Stuff!" cries Wilkins; "what has a child of her age to do with nerves?" and he gets up and goes out of the room bawling—"Jemima, Jemima!"

"Well, as Mr. Wilkins says, a little creature like my daughter ought not to be permitted to be nervous. Do you know, Mr. Chartres"—a young matronly rôle is now taken up—"I am in much distress about the dear child; she is quite a child you know still; but has outgrown her strength; and I fear she is become quite rush-like, quite stem-like indeed; and I am in much concern about her constitution. To look at her for the first time, you would almost take her for a girl of sixteen; though I need not tell *you* her age."

"If I remember right, she can't be much

more than eleven or twelve," the politic gentleman says. And he does still better ; for he doesn't allow Mrs. Wilkins to embarrass herself by making an untruthful statement, but changes the subject to the Australian climate, which he severely blames for its forcing properties on the growth of children. While he speaks, Wilkins and Jemima come into the room ; and I declare it is as much as Chartres can do to keep from laughing outright, when he sees the poor girl. Masham—his rough sea and Chinese manners still on him—utters a *sotto voce* "Pee-oo !" And it is well for the comfort of the remainder of the evening that nobody hears him.

Jemima is as frank and unembarrassed as a little thing of six would be ; and goes over to her old acquaintance with her hand eagerly stretched out.

"Give your old sweetheart, Mr. Chartres, a kiss, my darling," says Mrs. Wilkins, and the girl immediately does so with perfect unconstraint.

"And give Mr. Chartres' friend a kiss, my love," is the second order to the child, which

is also obeyed without a blush. Masham colours more than the girl—who is old enough to be his wife—does. She is sixteen years old, as Chartres very well knows, and so tall and well filled-out that no stranger would doubt the assertion that she is eighteen or nineteen.

Such is the infant who is sent about kissing young fellows, to show she is only a child still, and thus to make her mother appear but a girl. She looks utterly ridiculous in her bare arms, and her short dress nearly up to her knees, and long drawers nearly down to her ancles. The young men would pity the girl, did she show any sense of her absurd appearance ; but she does not ; in fact—from her mother's teaching—she talks, acts, and thinks precisely as she did ten years ago ; and seems no more to believe she can be a grown woman than that she can be a man. Had Masham asked her to do so, when she kissed him, she would have climbed on his knees and scratched his whiskers for him with perfect satisfaction. And this by the way, leads me to state that Mrs. Wilkins being now only about four-and-

thirty, must have been a married woman at her infantile daughter's age.

"She has indeed grown up wonderfully!" Chartres says.

"Yes; she'll soon be a little woman and able to help her old mother," says the brutal father. "We must soon put her in long frocks, and we'll buy her a pony to ride every day to make her strong."

Chartres doesn't dare to look at Mrs. Wilkins when "old mother" is said. But Masham does, and he is transfixed with astonishment at her vexed and—not to be ungallant, say—even vicious look. Margaret blushes scarlet, and turns pale, and forgets her *rôle* of a young matron, and simpers, and fumbles for her lace-trimmed handkerchief all in an instant, and even forces herself to laugh aloud. Wilkins' last words, concerning the long dress affords an opportunity of speaking to the point relative to age.

"How can you be so absurd, my dear, as to talk of dressing her up like an old woman? You'll spoil her."

"Why, you and I were courting when

you were as young as she is," papa says. Ah! the blunt villainy of stupid men!

Chartres comes to the rescue. "That is very likely," he says, "for I remember being in love when I was only fourteen, and my innamorata was of the mature age of ten."

"You know, John, we were only children when we were engaged," the lady remarks playfully; but giving her lord a furious frown as she gets up and walks towards the door, thus having, for an instant, her back towards her visitors and her face towards John.

Chartres now inquires for the boys; and Wilkins tells him they are at school at Melbourne. "But I am going to remove them from —— College," and here he names Short's school, "at the end of the quarter."

Chartres asks, "Why are you going to remove them?" But does not say a word about his being acquainted with Short.

"Because of the shameful way in which the pair at the head of the school are conducting themselves," is the answer, angrily said. "If I had been as wise a few months ago as I am now, I never should have sent

my sons to that drunken fellow, Short. The boys tell me he is half stupid with drink all day, and that the school is carried on by the under-masters."

This is only what Chartres has suspected. "But why do you say 'the pair?'" he inquires, "what has Mrs. Short to do in the matter that you blame her?"

"Blame her? Why shouldn't I blame her, when her own husband is for ever bawling out her doings? She must be a nice sort of lady when her own husband speaks against her!"

"Good heavens, Chartres! I have heard nothing of this!" Masham says.

"It is but too true, Ned, about poor Short," is the sad remark.

"Yes; but she?"

"I don't believe a single word against her. She is as good a woman as lives, I would swear."

"But Short they say is madly jealous, and openly accuses her," Wilkins says.

"Then I believe he is mad through drink when he does so," Chartres stoutly affirms.

Wilkins shakes his head sagely.

"Do you know them?" he inquires.

"From report," is the answer, "the same as many other people know them."

"He is not the first unhappy drunkard who has ruined his wife as well as himself," Chartres says. "I know that so far from being jealous a few months ago, he was foolishly fond of her, and ran and fetched at her bidding like a spaniel."

"So I always understood," Masham avers. "I have heard that such fellows, when they turn to drink, get a diseased kind of jealous affection, and are for ever crying out about their supposed injuries."

"There's something in that," Wilkins remarks. "However, their house is not the place for my children, or the children of any other gentleman."

Poor Short! his day and Annie's is over.

Shortly after, the tea-things are laid by the servant, Mrs. Wilkins comes smiling into the room; she has still got the young matron's manner upon her, as befits her in presence of Jemima. It rather astonishes her visitors to see that she has changed her former dress for a blue tarlatan, speckled with silver; over

this is a rich lace jacket, with silver trimmings, and round her slim waist is a broad belt edged and clasped with silver too. Her ear-rings are of the same metal, and her dark hair is set off by a string of pearls plaited through it. Chartres and Masham being only men, can't swear that the rings are not also changed; but from the finger-twistings of the lady they are inclined to believe that they have been treated to a view of new jewelry.

Of course Mrs. Wilkins does the honours of the tea table; and her first remark to Jemima is "my dear child, you must put some water to this tea I am giving you. Strong coffee or tea is not healthy for children, you know."

"Let her take it as it is, if she likes," says her papa.

"I don't care for these late teas at all," the ill-starred Jemima says; "I would rather have dinner at one and supper at six, as we used in England."

"She calls what was her papa's luncheon, his dinner, Mr. Masham," explains Mrs. Wilkins.

Wilkins coughs. He would never have

ventured so far as this ; but he can't help admiring his wife's feminine audacity.

Poor *Jemima* seems fated to inflict torture this evening. "Mr. *Chartres*, I wonder when I shall be a woman?" is one of her extraordinary queries.

"Oh, in ten or twelve years, *Jemima*," is the reply.

"I shall have long dresses like mother's then, and I shall be so glad ; for the boys all call me a young woman now ; and they say I am like a turkey with my long legs. Am I?"

"Do, pray, talk sensibly, *Jemima*," *mamma* says, while all the men cannot but laugh aloud.

"But they do—the boys, mother—*mamma* ; and they call out 'look at the young woman in the little girl's clothes!' I hate going out alone, I do."

"This is a dreadful place for unruly children, Mr. *Masham*. I suppose *Jemima*, my dear, you have learned those words 'mother' and 'father' from those vulgar children in the neighbourhood."

Jemima is eagerly about to explain that she had always in England used the words

without reproof. But Mrs. Wilkins is not to be caught so easily ; for before the girl can speak she says, "My love, I think you neglected to practise your new song 'Let me kiss him for his mother.'" Mrs. Wilkins knows quite well that Jemima had been setting the laughing jackasses going at eight o'clock yesterday morning practising that maudlin song ; but she also guesses that Jemima's vehement denial of the accusation may prevent her again alluding to the "mother and father ;" and so it does.

"It is no wonder," Chartres says to Masham, as they are going home ; "that the mother keeps the daughter out of view when she can ; for she must be always on thorns in her presence."

"It is curious that the young one hasn't more feminine tact about awkward subjects ; she's as simple as a little boy of ten."

"She is just as she has been brought up. If the old lady wants to be a young girl for many years longer, the young one will probably either live at home in a state of semi-infancy, or else run away altogether, and go to ruin."

"But unfortunate Philip Short and his poor wife, Chartres! I wonder you had patience with me when I chaffed you in my brutal way about the poor thing! How is it that you didn't tell me about them then?"

"You should remember my old rule, Ned, never to tell bad news if I can avoid it. I knew you must find out about the Shorts soon enough, and as to Annie, I heard nothing against her until Wilkins spoke to-night."

"Pray heavens, that you are not the sinner Short accuses!"

"Stuff! How the deuce could I be?"

"Jealous men won't be answered thus, 'they are jealous for they are jealous,'—you know the quotation."

"It is a dreadful subject, Ned, to speak lightly upon. Poor Annie, and poor Short too! What curse is over this country, that so many fine promising fellows should take to drink here?"

"By Jove, Will, I think it would take a pamphlet to discuss that. But isn't it wonderful that the natives are such sober fellows? It is only you and I, and the rest of the folk that are so fond of grog."

CHAPTER IV.

AT eleven o'clock on Monday morning Chartres and Foxey Sam proceed to work. It is laughable to see the fatalism of this man and the dependence he has on this new "martingale" of his. He stops just after he has got outside the door, and waits for Chartres to precede him, while Chartres is waiting for him to go first.

"Which way are we to go?" Chartres inquires.

"I leave that to you, mate," is the decisive answer.

"But I know nothing about the lead; I have been over the ground only once."

"I don't care about that, matey; I only know that you are the man to mark out the ground."

“But, good heavens, Sam, I tell you I know nothing of digging.”

“So much the better, mate. All the better luck. Go on!”

There is no more arguing with this Mahometan; his very voice has the hollowness of the African fatalist's, who won't throw a drowning man a rope, but lets him sink with the words “It is his kismet. The will of Allah be done!” So Chartres goes along towards a hill where he can perceive new ground being opened, and having cut down four stakes, he quietly proceeds to peg off his sixty square feet next to the last shaft. A man who is lazily smoking his pipe on a neighbouring log looks at the new comers as if he thinks they must be mad.

“What the devil are you up to?” he asks. “Don't you see that the ground is owned and pegged out well enough for a blind man to see?”

“I didn't—I wasn't aware—!” Chartres commences explaining, when the man in possession interrupts him scornfully.

“‘You wasn't aweer!’ Do you think I'm agoing to believe all that? And Foxey there! he didn't know either—I suppose?”

Everybody knows Sam, it appears.

"I have nothing to do with it, mate," says Samuel solemnly, and shaking his head slowly. "He there is the man, and wheresomever he goes, and whatsomever he does, I'm bound to obey him."

"Then, Foxey," says the other, laughing derisively; "you had best go and obey him somewhere's else; and don't let him go 'jumping' other men's claims, if he doesn't want a mischief done him."

Chartres is much vexed. "Why the devil, Sam, didn't you tell me I was doing wrong. You could see well enough that I knew nothing about claiming and pegging, and shepherding. That fellow there is shepherding, I suppose?"

"He is, mate," Sam says, quite calmly and soberly; "he's a shepherding for himself and three others as lives in that tent yonder."

"Then, for heaven's sake, show me some ground that is not already taken up, or we shall be in for a row before we go much further."

"If so be, mate, that the ground is marked out, or has a man on it, I don't think as it'll

be much use pegging there. But do as you please ; go wheresomever you like," are Sam's solemn words.

There is evidently no guidance to be got from this extraordinary companion ; so Chartres sees that he must depend wholly upon himself. As they walk along, he is soon rather astonished to find that though now more than half a mile past the spot first chosen, there is none of the ground along the gully which has not been taken up, and a good deal of it dug into. A little further on and they come to a spot between four hillocks. "Here," thinks the novice, "the gold may have settled when it was washed about in the stream some quadrillions of years ago." So he stops and looks about ; and doing so he catches Foxey's eye. The little optics sparkle like a hawk's, and the hand-rubbings are abundant. Sam looks the picture of triumph.

"This spot will do—eh ?" Chartres asks, much encouraged.

But Samuel's face grows stolid in an instant. "I'll say nothing, mate ; no, not if I saw the wash-dirt under my feet."

"Confound the fellow—what is he up to?" Chartres thinks. And hereupon he takes a survey of the ground, calls up all his geological knowledge, assures himself that where he stands is "made" ground—that is ground made by geological changes; and a happy idea strikes him.

"They all laughed at me yesterday, Sam, when I talked about draining without a pump. Let us see whether they will laugh at us this day week;" and he walks up one of the hillocks until he is about forty feet above the bottom of the gully, and plants the first peg decisively in the earth.

"In the name of fortune, amen!" is Sam's solemn invocation to good luck.

Then the two set steadily to work; and by sundown they have sunk about five feet.

Samuel questions his companion as they are digging. "Did you have any perticular reason, mate, for going out of the gully and up the hill here—I see you a-thinking over somethink?"

"I had a reason, Sam."

"Then I'm blest if I ain't sorry for it; for when you goes knowledgeable about it—as

I've been a doing this many a year—it all mostly comes to nothink.”

“We shall see, Sam.”

“And do you believe me, matey, when I see you a going to put in the pegs below there in the gully, I was as pleased as Punch, for thereabouts was the very spot I had pitched on a few days ago. And, says I, I'm in luck, surely.”

“Then for mercy's sake, Sam, let us dig there at once instead of here. I pitched on this high ground simply because I thought it was easy to be drained, and that is a great advantage on these wet diggings I know.”

“We're here, mate; and here we'll stay and see it out, please God,” Sam says, in a tone which shows that worlds could not move him.

And now for the second day of a new digger. Oh, the aches and the cramps when Chartres gets out of bed in the morning—especially in the back. Talk about the fatigue of a long walk! True, one's legs suffer; but his chest and arms are, at all events, free from pain. And grumble about the fatigue of hard riding! But here one's back only

suffers, while the rest of his body is at ease. After digging, however, every part of the frame, from the neck to the ankles, aches most fiercely. At breakfast, Chartres can hardly keep from laughing aloud at his frequent spasms of the chest, which interrupt his speech, like a hiccough. Of course, the others pride themselves in their immunity from the pain he feels. (Ah me, what paltry opportunity do we, poor wretches, ever lose of exalting ourselves !) His journey has been a capital training to Chartres. If he hadn't had that on foot, it is not probable he would handle shovel and pick for a week to come. As it is, Sam put him to his work in a very considerate fashion, leaving it to him all day only to wind up the buckets full of earth by the windlass, which is comparatively easy labour. Thus the pair got on very well the first day and the next ; and by the fourth, Chartres finds himself able to do his legitimate share.

They have now so nearly reached the wash-dirt, that they expect to "bottom" their hole the first thing the next morning, "if"—says Foxey, about an hour before

leaving off—"if so be the water don't dround us afore then. But, at all events, we must see about setting up that pump the first thing."

But to use Sam's hyperbolic expression, the water "drowns" them that very evening before they leave off working, and accordingly it receives Sam's anathemas in profusion. Foxey is "drownded" above his knees before he gives up; and Chartres looks forward to wet legs and rheumatism.

"What is our depth down, Sam?" he inquires.

Sam measures, and finds it is twenty-three feet.

"And what do you expect will be the thickness of the wash-dirt, Sam?"

"That depends upon you, matey," answers Sam very impressively.

"On me? What the deuce do you mean, Sam?"

"Yes; on you—and why? because it will be you as has brought the luck if so be it's there; and the more wash-dirt, mate, the more gold to get out of it. Hereabout it has run never much thicker than three or four foot."

And this eventful evening, as the two men go homeward, Chartres puts on his considering cap. He goes to his friend Wilkins's store, and there borrows an old piece of india-rubber tubing, about seventy feet long, which he has seen in the store ; it is an old tank-pipe, formerly used for watering Wilkins's garden in his last residence.

"And now, Ned," he says to Masham, to whom he has confided his plan, "let us see whether a 'wrinkle,' such as the Greeks never were up to, but which every brewer's drayman in Europe is acquainted with now, will or will not astonish Sam and his friends in the morning?"

So out they go—Ned and Chartres—when the moon has risen ; fill their tube with water by curling it up at the bottom of the shaft ; and corking up one end of it, they lead their syphon down the hillock ; and tying their cork well, home they saunter.

"There are plenty of the fellows about here have money to throw away, Will," Masham suggests, "and if I were you I should make a bet with them. What they may lose to you, remember, will certainly be more than

made up to them by the knowledge they will gain."

And to bet it was agreed.

"It can't be done!" cries Scotty Wallace.

"I tell you it can and will," says Chartres.

"What!" says the landlord, "empty out a hole without pumping, or digging, or draining?"

"Yes."

"But, I say, no!" the host thunders, for the grog is in the ascendant.

This takes place at the bar of a public-house.

"Yes," says the amateur engineer, "and what is more the water can be made to flow upwards of its own accord, up and over the top of the hole, and away from the claim."

"Yes, it can," a sage by-stander puts in, "by a force-pump or an endless chain. How else, I should like to know?" he sneers.

"Give me a bit of paper, and a pen and ink," is Chartres' request of the landlord, and he thereupon indites the following:—

"I hereby bet the sum of one pound with ——— against each of their ten pounds that I will drain the water out of the hole I am now

working at, without any pump or other appliance which requires any labour beyond that necessary for setting it going ; and that I will make the water to flow upwards of its own accord and pass out of the hole."

This he reads aloud, amidst a breathless silence.

A man with hardly a rag on his back steps forward excitedly. "Show me that!" he cries, snatching the paper out of Chartres' hand.

He reads it carefully over thrice ; and before he has gone over it the last time, he commences fumbling nervously about the waist of his ragged shirt.

"I'll lay you that," putting a ten pound note before the host ; "I'll lay you that to a pound, Mister," turning to Chartres, "that you don't do it."

Chartres looks at Masham ; he doesn't half like winning this poor raggamuffin's money.

But Masham says nothing.

Scotty Wallace here starts up, "And I'll lay you the same, mate, that you don't do it." And in an instant his ten pounds is placed in the landlord's hands.

"Scotty," says Chartres, "can you really afford to lose this money?"

Scotty sneers, and inquires whether it isn't an insult to ask him this?

The host of the boarding house here excitedly offers to bet fifty pounds to one against the new draining plan.

It is a tremendous temptation to poor Chartres; and he asks Ned what he ought to do.

Masham advises him not to bet too highly, for fear of the wagerers becoming enemies when they should lose. So Chartres turns round and says.

"I'll not go higher than a ten against each man."

By this time there are five wagerers; and fifty pounds are soon lodged in the host's hands.

"I don't half like that Trew, the landlord, having my money," Scotty Wallace whispers to Masham, "suppose you take and hold it?" and he calls out, "Let my friend here hold the stakes."

"All right," Masham says to Scotty, "I'm willing."

"I have no doubt but what you are!" is the derisive remark of one of the wagers.

"Who knows that we mightn't be 'bested' out of our money!" another cries. "Here you, Trew, hand me back that cash of mine."

"I'll be d——d if I do!" returns host Trew, mortally offended at the imputation the request conveys.

There is every indication of a row being at hand.

"Here's two coons!" cries a non-wagerer, by the way, "that wants to *do* us out of our money, a-betting on what they know well enough no man can perform. Here's a a pretty go!"

A murmur of indignation pervades the now crowded bar. Trew is up in arms. He is a six-foot publican who passes by the title of "the king." He runs into his private room and puts the stakes under lock and key; then out he rushes—his face all a-blaze with brandy and indignation—"Who's that talking about being done? If he's a man, let him show himself!" he cries furiously, leaping over his counter and into the midst of his

customers. "Who is it that dares talk about my *doing* him?"

"No one, King, no one talks about you. It's only about them two," says some friend.

"And how—how I want to know can they do anything wrong, when I hold the stakes?"

Here a chorus of voices drowns the vociferation of the King. "Are his notes good?—they are chums, you know—I see them a-looking at one another."

"Didn't I see 'em whisper, too!"

"Be careful on 'em, mate!" are the things said now.

Chartres, to tell truth, doesn't like this. He would back out of it for the sake of peace, were it not for Masham, who is as bold as a hawk now.

"I'll give it up, Ned, as they are such a lot of cowards," he calls across their heads to Masham.

"And I would see them d——d first. It is you who would be the coward then!"

"Where's that Scotty?" somebody here enquires; "let him stand out like a man, and say what he thinks."

customers. "Who is it that dares talk about my *doing* him?"

"No one, King, no one talks about you. It's only about them two," says some friend.

"And how—how I want to know can they do anything wrong, when I hold the stakes?"

Here a chorus of voices drowns the vociferation of the King. "Are his notes good?—they are chums, you know—I see them a-looking at one another."

"Didn't I see 'em whisper, too!"

"Be careful on 'em, mate!" are the things said now.

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"And I would see them d——d first. It is you who would be the coward then!"

"Where's that Scotty?" somebody here enquires; "let him stand out like a man, and say what he thinks."

But, as an historian who is proverbial for truth, even when he can't be contradicted, I am here obliged to confess that Scotty is neither more nor less than a coward! It is wonderful what bravery any Pistol may get credit for! Scotty is a Pistol, but a sensible one, like his ancient name-sake, so he had cleared-out and made his way homeward to mount guard over Chartres' boxes, knowing that come what might, he has here his ten pounds' worth of property, in compensation for what he might be swindled out of in wagering.

"He's gone—he's off!"

"He's in the game," several voices cry.

"Aye, leave Scotty Wallace alone for that," somebody else laughs.

"Who knows the man as offers the bet—him and his mate, there; do you?" one of the angry wagers asks the host of the boarding-house.

"I don't know any more about them than that they live with me," Dublin Jack returns.

"If that be all you want," Chartres calls out, "if you had let me know about what you were in doubt, or what you really

wanted, I could have saved you a good deal of unnecessary talk. I am an intimate friend of Mr. Wilkins."

There is a dead silence hereupon; and the speaker proceeds: "But as you seem so very anxious to back out of a fair bet, and to take your money again, it is just as likely you will pretend to think that Mr. Wilkins is a cheat, as you pretend to believe me to be."

Some of the listeners laugh at this; but the wagerers are very indignant—especially the raggamuffin. "D—n me, I'll double the money," this individual cries in an ecstasy of wrath. "Somebody there, ask Mr. Wilkins to say this man is *square*, and I'll double the money!"

Masham has already gone across the street to the magistrate's store, desirous of quelling the incipient row, and as the ragged man speaks, in comes the universally respected storekeeper. He takes off his hat as if he were on the hustings.

"Gentlemen, I am happy to inform you that I have had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Chartres, here," laying his hand on Chartres' shoulder, "of knowing him intimately for

some years past, both in this country and in England, in better times; and I can only assure you that if we had more men of his honour, his honesty, propriety and—and—good feeling among us, the country would be all the better off in holding on its natal soil men of worth like my friend." Such are the speaker's words.

"And like yourself, Mr. Wilkins!" bawls out a fellow deep in the storekeeper's brandy and whiskey account.

"Thank you, my friends," John says graciously, and waving his hand theatrically; and suddenly he disappears now he finds he has made a favourable point.

"Now, old Skin-'em-alive," the King roars, "what do you say to that? Bless you, I knew Mr. Chartres all along, only I wouldn't satisfy you all."

He had never seen or heard of Chartres before to-night, although he talks in this manner.

"I say," vociferates Skin-'em-alive (the ragged man) who is named thus from his habitual dinginess and hollow-jawed appear-

ance, "I say that I'll bet another ten pounder against his one!"

"Shall I take him, Masham?" Chartres inquires.

"Most assuredly I would, if it were only to pay him out with the others for doubting you."

"It's all right enough, mate," sneers an acquaintance of Ned's, "there aint much fear of anybody being a loser but Chartres himself."

"It's settled, then?" a waggerer calls out.

"Wait a bit, men," Chartres explains, "I don't wish to mislead you. I must use something—"

"Aye," Skin-'em-alive says, with a wink to the company. "It's all coming out, now!"

Chartres proceeds: "But that something shall only be—"

"—A bucket! Ah! mate, you aint going to get over us that way!" a wit interrupts.

"It shall only be a tube——"

"—With a sucker, and a handle—ain't it?" inquires the wit.

"Nothing, I tell you, but a plain tube!"

"Then I'm done!" Wit sneers.

And it seems that every-body else is done, too; for no objection is offered to the plain tube. And the sixty pounds being staked against the six, it is arranged that the wager is to be decided at eight o'clock in the morning.

Masham and Charles call in at Wilkins' as they go homewards, and explain about the syphon to him. Chartres asks his advice as to betting, and states his reasons against doing so.

"Nonsense!" says the magistrate, "bet away. All of those fellows can as well afford to lose their ten or twenty pounds as I can. There's no harm whatever in it. If their spare cash doesn't go to you, it will only go to the public-house before the week is out."

So Chartres' doubts concerning the poverty of his opponents are allayed.

When the two friends reach home, Chartres takes his tarpaulin and blankets, and tells Masham that he intends going to sleep near his tube, for fear of any foul play.

"I'll go, Will, instead of you."

Of course the other protests.

"But think of the wife and children, Will!"

"My good fellow, haven't I already often slept out?" Chartres returns, laughing.

"That was when you had to do it. Let me go, old fellow. What, if you catch cold just now that your luck seems coming? I will go. It is a whim, I suppose; but upon my word I should like to do something for your dear wife, in return for all the kindness she has shown me; and when I am taking care—don't you see—of even a hulking fellow like you, I am doing a good action for her and the chickens."

So Ned goes. "It is just as well," he thinks as he lies on his back, looking up at the stars. "Just as well, and better, that I am here instead of Will, for I don't trust one of those fellows farther than I can see him. If they were to find out about the syphon it is not unlikely that Skin-'em-alive or Scotty would give him a knock on the head which might kill him, or might not, just as it happened. And what would Lucy do then? Ah! Lucy, where can I ever hope to find such a sweet girl as you are, to love me?"

Before Ned lies down, he throws the tubing altogether down the hole; and thus leaves nothing to be seen by a gentleman who, about one o'clock in the morning—and apparently before retiring to his early couch—sneaks up to the shaft, muttering to himself, and in so doing nearly falls over the watcher.

“I won’t pretend I have seen you, Master Scotty!” thinks Masham, “but it’s pretty certain you are a sharp fellow.”

It need hardly be related that Scotty had fled on the wings of the wind, when he saw, as he thought, Chartres. However, when he got home and found William in bed, he imagined the watcher was only a new arrival camping out, and so his mind was at peace.

CHAPTER V.

WILKINS next morning goes with the party to see the sport. About a hundred of the diggers in the immediate neighbourhood of the claim, and many of the wagers' friends are here too.

"Here, Ned, catch hold of the end, and haul!" cries Chartres from the bottom of his hole.

The King objects to this assistance as not being in the wager. "You said 'I' mate," he argumentatively affirms; "and I means 'me' all over the world."

In consequence of this Chartres has to scramble up for a rope, scramble down the hole again to attach it to the tube, and then scramble up again with the end of the line in his teeth.

There is a dead silence as he hauls up the tube, and lays it along the ground.

He presses it and finds it full of water. His heart beats with the certainty of soon having sixty pounds to send to his wife and family. In his triumph, he can't avoid appearing to doubt of his success. So he puts his mouth to the *corked* end of the tube, and makes as if he were commencing to suck the water out of the claim.

"By golly!" roars somebody *not* a wagerer, "he's going to keep us all here for a year or more, till he has sucked all the water up!"

There is such a tremendous shout of laughter here at the expense of the wagerers, that it might be heard half a mile off. The stampings and cat-calls and whistlings are such as may be observed in the upper gallery of a theatre on pantomime nights. The expression on the various wagerers' countenances, may be better imagined than described.

But the King recovers his presence of mind first, and bringing his paper to the rescue, reads out the part, "without any work beyond setting it going."

"And won't sucking it, for no matter how

long, be setting it going, King?" Chartres gravely inquires.

There is another roar of laughter; and the King being a stout choleric individual, his face flares up like a smith's forge.

"Come, come, now, none o' that!" he cries ominously, "I'm not a-going to stand that!" and here, all of a sudden, he cools down to a preternatural business-like degree, saying gravely, "I think I may hand over that money."

"So you may, my dear King!" Chartres says, pulling out the cork, and letting the water flow out in a full stream.

It is a fact that some of the observers are so much astonished at this most commonplace feat, that one of them, who has on his thigh boots, actually jumps down into the hole and feels about with his foot for concealed machinery.

"I'm blessed if there aint nothing—nothing in the world!" he cries, as soon as he reaches the top of the shaft again.

Had this ridiculous syphon been the "rocket,"—the first locomotive steam-engine—it couldn't have created more sur-

prise. The "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" and "well, after thats!" and "I'm blesseds!" would have filled a page. The King scratches his head, and is so utterly astonished that he actually hands over to Chartres the sixty pounds before half the water is out of the hole!

Now the evening previous to all this, Chartres had explained to Wilkins the action of a syphon, of course in general terms; and so here is an unprecedented opportunity of making a speech, showing learning.

"Now, my friends, some of you have lost your pounds, and one of you more enterprising than the others—"

Here Skin-'em-alive pushes his way to the front, to show himself as "an enterprising man."

"—More enterprising than the others has lost his twenty pounds. But I may—in the name of my friend Mr. Chartres—promise you this; namely, that he will teach you the secret of this mechanical contrivance, which, indeed, is no new one, inasmuch as it has been known for many centuries. And the man who has lost his twenty pounds shall

have, as a gift from myself—for I am the proprietor of this borrowed tubing—of this very apparatus. If that be not the worth of the money lost, paid twenty times over in pumping expenses, I am much astonished.”

Most of the bystanders, especially the non-wagerers, assent cordially to this. And then Wilkins makes a rather lengthy speech, descriptive of hydraulics in general. He, indeed, does his friend a really serviceable turn, by his eloquence in soothing the irritation of the losers of the money, who might, hereafter, be very inimical and troublesome to Chartres. By the time he has concluded his peroration the hole is completely drained.

Foxy Sam here jumps down into it, and a tremendous shout issues from the ground. As all rush forward, he reappears, holding up a nugget, weighing more than eleven ounces.

This, to all observers, is the first fruits of the new system of draining, for the water has dissolved the clay around the gold, and left the shining treasure visible.

“Eleven times four are forty-four, Will!” says Masham; for the weight of the nugget was perceived by the experienced diggers,

almost as well as if the scales had been used. "You'll have twenty-two pounds as your share of that ; and this, with your sixty pounds already won, will make eighty-two sovereigns for your first day's, or rather your first week's work at digging !"

"Didn't I tell you all that he'd bring luck with him !" yells Sam ; and he mounts still higher. "Aye, and I know well enough that there's thousands of ounces in this hole still !"

Nobody says much to this. They all know Foxey's bounce too well to regard it.

But the diggers mind their own interest pretty sharply ; for before Sam has shown his nugget to the thirtieth man, the ground on every side of the fortunate claim is safely pegged-out, and not an inch of land is left for the re-discoverers of the main lead to take up when their present claim shall be exhausted. So much for boasting !

"Oh, Sam, Sam !" cries Masham, "you've settled yourself by showing that nugget !"

Sam knows this as well as his monitor. But it is only the old thing repeated. Were their lives depending upon the result, diggers cannot help boasting of their luck. Thus they

usually lose all chances of obtaining any more good ground than their fortunate claim. In Australia bragging must be done ; nothing can stop it.

Here, I think, it will be as well to finish my history of Chartres' successes at digging, in as few words as will suffice.

The first washing-up at the end of the week returned no less than sixty-seven pounds cash a man, exclusive of the eleven ounce nugget ; by no means a bad return for four days' work ! Prospects were still brighter than realities ; for as the wash-dirt was gone further into, it got richer and richer ; indeed, it was but the mere skimmings of it, which was washed up the first Saturday.

Chartres is become a new man. Mrs. Wilkins compliments him upon the great change in his personal appearance ; and well she may. His very walk is different to what it was, and his body more upright, and his step firmer, now he is out of poverty. Even his brain partakes of the change in his fortunes, and becomes more prompt and active than formerly ! Is it any wonder that the rich have almost the monopoly of beauty, and

that the poor—God help them—are but too often as ugly in their bodies as their cruel fortunes are?

“And now,” thinks Chartres, “if the hole brings me in but double what it already has done—and this is not too much to expect from it—I shall have the money to erect a puddling machine, and buy horses and carts for carrying. I can set it up near my hole in the gully, and my syphon will supply it with water. If I never find an ounce of gold again, my machine will bring me in ten or twelve pounds a week. Hurrah for digging!”

Yes, poor fellow; he may well congratulate himself on his turn of luck! How would it have been with him had he sunk shaft after shaft and found nothing—as the majority of diggers do?

Saturday is usually a whole, certainly a half-holiday among miners, and Chartres and Sam have done their washing-up, and sold their gold by twelve o'clock. With what happiness does Chartres sit down to write to his wife in Melbourne! He sends her a draft for fifty pounds, and tells her to pay his good friend Crowley the rent, and to buy herself

and the children new clothes, for that he is soon coming down to take them up to the diggings, where he will have a nice little weatherboard cottage to receive them, and form into a new home. He says much more than this ; but I will not relate it. Let his sayings be guessed at now that he feels he is prosperous, and eagerly, in written words, endeavours to share his prosperity with those to whom he is all in all.

CHAPTER VI.


SUNDAY passes—that happy Sunday, never to be forgotten! Monday too goes by, and Tuesday; Chartres and Sam hard at work, getting up wash-dirt. And on Wednesday evening, when he reaches home, he receives a letter from Melbourne. It is not from Lucy though; but it is concerning her. Mrs. Crowley writes, or rather her boy does so in her name—for the good lady would not find it easy to use her pen now—and the intelligence is that Lucy “is not well; she is sick of a low fever the doctor says, and John and me thinks you had better come to Melbourne if you can, for she seems very sick indeed.” That ancient word “sick” is always used in Australia, as in Ireland and America, instead of “ill.” And the letter continues, “I have sat up with her this two nights, and she kept

calling out on you, and saying she would never see you again."

Well is it for poor William that as he reads this letter he is in a room alone. His great love makes him fear greatly; and to say—as in such a case as his would mostly be said, "that he grew pale, and trembled," would be expressing just nothing at all. Oh, God—that moment! To have gained all one day—what happiness! But to lose more than all the next—what misery! But "misery" can't express what he feels.

"You had best come to her!" Why, without one doubt, without a thought of hesitation even, he would give up the assurance of gaining twenty thousand pounds, rather than not fly to her that hour. He knows what low fever often means in the colony; but too often—death. And the idea of losing Lucy!—but he absolutely scouts the thought of such a thing, as if it were an impossibility.

He would start for Melbourne at the moment; and so he does, on a horse, which he buys from Sam for double its worth. He knows the influence his presence will have on



Lucy; he remembers her frequent playful assertion about his very voice being able to cure her of all her little womanly nervous disorders. Does he not know that in his absence she could never even sleep quietly, or for longer than a few minutes at a time? And here is he, away from her; and she perhaps——! Has he not, two or three times, returning home unexpectedly, found her nervous and ill, and an hour after his return has she not become herself again? No; not if a mine of gold were to be gained by delay, would he stay from her one unnecessary moment.

Masham promises to take his place with Foxey, and see that there is no “washing-up” until his return. And thus having arranged matters, he, an hour after the receipt of the cruel letter, is on his road to Melbourne. It is seven o’clock in the evening when he starts; and he has a hundred and twenty miles to do by noon next day, if man can do it.

He looks forward to getting a fresh horse at the shanty where “Jimmy the General” is. It is a bad road, or rather bridle path;

and it is only by the aid of a box of wax matches—lighted now and then to examine the foot prints of horses—that Chartres is able to reach the shanty at all ; which he does about four o'clock in the morning.

And now he finds the real use in the colony of being affable and friendly to everybody, no matter what his condition. In England, a gentleman, or even a parvenu, may hold his own, sure of getting any little service he requires for half-a-crown or five shillings. In Australia, he may keep his “five bob,”—as the bushmen term it—and do his work himself, if he be not liked. If Chartres had not been friendly with “Jimmy the General” on a former occasion, and secured his good will, he might, that memorable morning, have “whistled” for a fresh horse, except he had purchased Jimmy’s own, or one of the landlord’s at a fabulous price. But Chartres rouses up his friend Jimmy out of a deep drunken slumber, and tells him how he has ridden all night, and about his wife’s being ill in Melbourne ; and the poor drunkard’s heart is touched.

“Look here, matey,” says Jimmy, rubbing

his eyes; "I don't think there's two men hereabouts, except yourself, that I'd lend that mare of mine to. However, you shall have her. I'll take your horse and try and find her, at once; for I know where she camps, safe and sound out of the night wind."

And Jimmy goes off at once, for it is just now getting light enough to see. After seven or eight miles riding about, Jimmy brings in his old mare.

"What am I to pay you, Jimmy, old fellow? Don't make it more than you can help; for something tells me I'm going to have a bad time of it! Say fifteen shillings a day."

"We'll settle it when you come back," Jimmy says, "and if you're hard up, why then I'll charge you nothing at all. If you find you'll be able to pay me, then we'll say ten shillings a day."

"Jimmy," says Chartres, touched at the really friendly conduct of this poor outcast, and only those who in Australia have experienced what it is not to be able to borrow a horse when wanted urgently can fully com-

prehend Jimmy's kindness, "Jimmy, a friend in need is a friend indeed!"

And hereupon for the second time, and solely for the sake of the poor General, there is a round of drinks.

Poor old Jimmy says to Chartres' remark "‘*bis dat qui cito dat*,’ matey; and so *au revoir*.” And the traveller is off on the steady-going old mare.

There are still more than fifty miles to do, thirty of which are still hilly or mountainous ground. But the mare, like old animals all over the world, is sensible and does better in the long run than a younger and stronger horse. Young animals are enthusiastic, and on a bad road soon expend their strength, especially if they are pushed. The old staggers husband their resources, and push along at a regular, if slow, pace. So with Jimmy's mare. She gets on the level road about eight in the morning, and not then by any means used up; she is able to go along in the usual Australian canter for the rest of the journey; and Chartres, thoroughly worn out, reaches Melbourne at one o'clock that afternoon.

The effects of a quick ride for a moderate distance are, as every equestrian knows, very exhilarating. The nerves are braced up, and the pulse is quickened, so that even a timid man becomes bold, and a woman unblushing for an hour or so after their exercise. But a long and weary journey in the saddle has very peculiar effects. After such, a man feels almost as he might, had he been imbibing a pint of brandy, and indulging for a few minutes afterwards in an uneasy nap. It is by no means a pleasant feeling, but rather one of painful dullness, in which the mind seems to be thrown partially off its balance, while the senses seem to be but half awake. Every hard riding Australian well knows what I mean. No doubt the severe motion of the horse affects the brain, and the effects remain for a longer or shorter time as one is or is not accustomed to the saddle. The sun, too, in the hot weather plays a distressing part. Some men, accustomed to an indoor life are nearly stupified by a long walk or ride on a hot day. Indeed, the well known Australian saying "he has been too much in the sun," applied to anyone half drunk, shows

that even drunkards plead light and heat as an excuse for unsteady legs and tongue.

Chartres had never—and very few men even in Australia have never ridden right off upwards of a hundred-and-twenty miles, without making a few hours' stoppage. Thus we may imagine the state of poor William, both physically and mentally.

The horse is put up at stables near at hand; and he goes to his house on foot. As the children are out every day during Lucy's illness with a caretaker, by the direction of the thoughtful Mrs. Crowley, he is enabled to enter his home without the usual vociferous salutations. He goes round by the back garden, and surprises that good samaritan Mrs. Crowley, who for ten days back has been regularly self-installed as manager of the house of illness.

"My, Mr. Chartres! You here already? Why, I only sent ye word the day before yesterday, by the mail. Did you get my letter, or has it passed you on the road?"

Chartres explains that he has received the letter, and by what means he has succeeded in coming home so quickly.

"But deary me, Sir, you look almost as bad as——"

"Tell me for heaven's sake—How is *she* dear Mrs. Crowley?"

"Bless your heart alive, Sir, now you're come, she'll soon be right enough I'm sure."

O, what a blessed relief it is to hear these words!

"There is no danger? For God's sake tell me that! What does the doctor say? Has he been here this morning? Where is she now? is she in pain?"

The good matron is quite taken aback by this flood of questions, but she replies in general terms.

"It's only the nerves, the doctor says; and that's all it is, too. Bless ye, she'll be up again afore the week is out, now she'll have you with her; and you'll be able to take her back with you, which is just what she'll be glad of. She's asleep now, poor dear, and we mustn't disturb her. So you go and make yourself nice and clean and comfortable, and eat and drink something, and then take a nap yourself."

"And have you been with her ever since

she took ill, Mrs. Crowley?" is Chartres' enquiry in tones of gratitude.

"Never you mind that, my dear. What trouble is it to me to come and see after the dear lady and the children? The girl she had was more trouble a-most than no one at all."

The kindness which these good Crowleys have shown Chartres and his family is really great, and William is thoroughly penetrated with a sense of it now, more so than ever. Who of his more polished acquaintances would have done, without hope of fee or reward, and just from mere goodness of heart, what this good woman and her husband had done and still do for him and for his? I suppose it was from the overwrought state of his nerves, but he is now nearly about to make a boy of himself and cry over his deep sense of gratitude. What might not have happened to his Lucy, only for the motherly care of this good soul? And he goes over, and taking her honest hand, thanks her fervently for her kindness.

The old lady, too, is affected. "My dear,"

she says, with her eyes filled with tears, "I know you and she would do as much and more for us. If we didn't help one another in this world, and forget and forgive, what should we all do?" Then she says in an agitated whisper, "But, dear Mr. Chartres, what have you been doing or writing about my poor Johnny? for I'm told he's very angry against you."

This is all mysterious to Chartres, and he says so.

"How could I offend him, and I away at the diggings? I have not written to him, or even spoken of him, that I can recollect."

Mrs. Crowley shakes her head sorrowfully.


"Ah, my dear, we shouldn't care so much—though you know how we love him—only for the drink. I'm told that he has never been sober since we've lost sight of him. And as it so happened, he had been to see her that day, with a present of the first raspberries of the season, for he knew how fond she was of them; and he was always such a kind-hearted lad, and never happier than when he was obliging others. They tell me he has been drinking ever since. John and

I have been to his lodgings and his office, and we've sent after him three or four times every day ; but he has never been back to one place or the other since he left."

Chartres thinks "This talk of Crowley's against me is evidently a result of his drinking bout ; or," and a curious feeling comes over him—"can Lucy have foolishly said anything at which he could have taken offence, or can one of the children have childishly repeated any home conversations of ours about him ? This, while he is drinking, might come and remain uppermost in his mind."

"I wish to God, Sir," the poor mother whimpers, wiping her eyes with her apron, "I wish to God, Sir, I could come across him, or get some kind friend, like yourself, to find him and bring him to reason ; for it is a sore thing to see my dear boy turning to drink—that accursedest thing of all things in this country. He has never got drunk afore ; and our hearts is breaking about him."

Here is an opportunity for returning some of the many kindnesses shown by the good couple ! And Chartres says that this very



day he will go and find John ; and he guarantees to bring him home again , and he laughs and says, " I will give him such a sound lecture as will make him a teetotaler for the rest of his days."

But the mother doesn't smile.

" I am amost afraid, Mr. Chartres, for you to go nigh him, after the way, they tell me, he's been scolding you ; he's always talking against you, I'm told, and —"

" —But that they always do in their drink —always scold their very best friends you know," William says cheerfully ; " I will go after him ; and I'll bet you a hundred pounds I'll bring him home to you this very day."

The good Samaritan still hesitates.

" God bless you, Sir, for that. But, Mr. Chartres, you'll promise me one thing, for old friendship's sake, Sir, and for all our sakes—that you'll not be angry with my boy, and forgive and forget. Do, Sir !" she says anxiously ; " do ; and we'll never forget it to you and yours."

" My dear, kind creature, what have I to forgive ? Some foolish words, which he'll be

the very first himself to laugh at and regret when he is all right again. Pooh!"

"God grant it may be so, Sir. Young Ned Phillips wouldn't tell us what my poor boy said again you ; he didn't like (he said) to repeat it for peace sake. But he said it was things very bad indeed and quarrelsome."

"Whatever it may be, my good creature, heaven knows I shall not be angry with him for it—if—if, of course, it be not something very wrong that no man, drunk or sober, ought to talk about—a man's family for instance."

"Aye, there it is Mr. Chartres," the poor mother says, wringing her hands together. "I do hope our Johnny has not been and lost his senses so as to talk that way, poor boy, spite of all they pretend he has said."

And here the kind-hearted creature weeps again, and is silent for a while. Chartres does not comfort her ; he, indeed, rather requires comfort himself, for his mind is beginning to be terribly racked.

"But tell me, Sir," Mrs. Crowley says, when she has ceased weeping, "promise me that



you'll look over it, if so be it's even as bad as what you say. He'll soon, please God, come to his own good sense, and acknowledge his fault. You will forget and forgive? I know you will, my dear!"

How can Chartres resist this appeal of a mother in favour of her son? He cannot; and he promises that he will forgive and forget all—whatever it may be.

It is too apparent to him that the very thing he fears has taken place; and that his good friend, Mrs. Crowley, has heard something of it.

Without a word more than his promise he leaves Mrs. Crowley, goes into the sitting-room and throws himself on the sofa; whereupon he falls asleep, utterly worn out and much in the same condition of mind—only in an intensified degree—which one feels who has been watching and wakeful for several nights together, at the bedside of a beloved friend. His sleep is no usual slumber—these two hours that he lies on that sofa. As ill-fortune would have it, too, it is to-day blowing a hot wind, and the air is like that near a furnace. The only escape from it is in an underground

cellar; and unfortunately that necessity is not in Chartres' house.

He lies there aching in every limb, throbbing in every artery, and vibrating in every nerve, not asleep, and yet not awake. The street outside is deserted, and it is only at rare intervals that the rumble of a cab, or a tradesman's cart, or the shriek of a railway whistle reaches his dull ear, through the clouds of heated dust which penetrate even the room where he lies; for he has left the door open, so as to catch the least sound of Lucy's waking. Now, he is turning the eternal windlass, with the sun pouring its burning rays on his back; again he is in the saddle, sometimes among the rocks, and guiding his horse along them, sometimes cantering along the dusty hot road homewards. At one time he is quite conscious of being in his own dear home, and recollects all that conversation about John Crowley; yet this seems as if it had taken place many days ago, rather than but an hour since. He once has sense enough to wish he had taken—as Mrs. Crowley recommended—either a glass of stout, or a few drops of laudanum to soothe

him. However, Lucy is ill, and it is for him to watch for the happy moment when he can make his presence known. Now, he is awake and yet dreaming about her, again he is asleep and dreaming of Sam and the syphon. At last he can hear himself breathing heavily, and then, indeed, he is soon really in the arms of "tired nature's sweet restorer."

How long this lasts he, of course, cannot guess ; but he knows afterwards that he has only lain down about two hours, when he dreams he feels other arms than nature's softly enfolding him. He dreams he can feel a sweet breath on his forehead ; and then (after a long, long interval) lightly, ever so lightly, on his lips ; and then he feels the warmth of a well-known face close to his own ; and then he can hear the murmuring, "My darling ! O my darling ! Is he come home to me ? my love, my own ! Ah, how ill he looks ! he has nearly killed himself to come to me quickly. O, my life, my husband !" And he knows that some one close to him is weeping, and murmuring his name, and gazing into his face, and gently fanning him. This is the happiest quarter hour of his rest.

Had it been any other time, the first words of the beloved voice would have caused him to open his eyes ; but now he is so thoroughly exhausted, that he has no power to move a muscle for a long time. At length he becomes conscious. He waits to think exactly where he is even before he can open his eyes. And then, at last, he knows he is in his own home, his dear wife kneeling beside him, and murmuring to him, and weeping as she murmurs. There she is, in her white dressing robe, actually up, out of her bed, and in another room than her sick chamber—declaring that now her dear William is with her, she is strong and well again, and that no hurt can reach her !

Her face is very pale, and the skin shrivelled, or as it were, tightened over those lovely features which William has last seen in the soft bloom and freshness of youthful womanhood. Even uncertain as his first slumberous look is, he can see that those once large and full eyes—large and full as those of an idealised picture of a goddess—are now shrunken and hollow. Her voice trembles as she repeats those well-known terms

of love and happiness, and her arm trembles too, as she softly clasps it round her husband's form.

"You are going to scold me, my darling, now, for getting up and coming to you; but you must not, you need not, my own husband, for I'm not ill now. I'm quite strong and happy; as happy as ever;" and here the lips quiver so much, and the nervous shock seems to come on again so strongly and so suddenly, that he dares not let her finish what she has to say.

Ah! those sensitive nerves of women! And yet Lucy is no ridiculous, hysterical being, nor ever has been. She has never fainted but once, and that was in her childhood, after a severe fall; nor has her husband ever known her to have hysterics. Once it is true, just after his marriage, when he pretended to be very much affected by seeing a ghost, and had whitened his face with chalk, pretending to show the intensity of his fear, and had related how the ghost declared he was to die that day month, she had laughed and cried at the same moment. But that was the nearest approach to anything in the ortho-

dox nervous disorder of ladies he has ever known. On this account, he is the more distressed to see her in her present state. He interrupts her then as she speaks.

"And how did my darling girl know I was come?"

A curious answer is given. "The moment I awoke, I was sure my husband was near me. I had been dreaming. And oh, that horrid dream! But the instant I became conscious, I seemed to know you were near me. Night and day I had prayed that you might soon return to us; and yet I didn't like to write and ask you to come to me, although I felt that your dear presence would make me well and happy."

"And when you awoke, Mrs. Crowley told you I was here, my own?"

"My darling, I was out of bed and at my room door listening for your dear voice before she ever knew I was awake. Then she heard me calling, and came in; and I knew from her face that my William was really come to me."

"Here, then, is a regular piece of clairvoyance, Miss?"

"Call it anything, William dearest ; but I know I awoke as if I were a new being. I felt well and strong the moment I opened my eyes."

"And now you are going to be well and strong, and happy for ever and a day. Don't you know I'm a lucky man at last ; and what happiness is in store for us?"

But instead of a smile and a kiss, and some joyous lighthearted words, that dreadful nervous spasm comes over her again ; and as he looks tenderly at her again, her pallid face shows the anguish of her sensitive mind ; and she lays her burning head on his shoulder, and weeps as if her very heart must break. She motions towards the open room-door, and Chartres reaches over and closes it.

But Mrs. Crowley has already heard the sobbings, and thinks it best not to interfere. "She's better with him than with me, poor thing," she opines. "How they do love each other to be sure ! I never see the like of it afore—God bless them !" So the good soul stays where she is.

For the first few minutes there is not much use in William's whispering any words of

consolation or affectionate reproof to his poor nervous girl, for her sobs hardly permit him to hear his own voice. It is easy to see how hard the poor thing strives to be calmer, and how extraordinarily fearful she is lest her agitation should be known to her kind friend Mrs. Crowley. At length she can both hear and speak ; and to William's words——

“You promised, you know, that now I was come you would be quite happy, and never——”

“And so I am happy, my darling—as happy—as happy as I can ever hope to be in this world again !”

Here is evidently some foolish stuff of an overwrought imagination ; and William laughs, and asks her is this the effect of her dream, or what silly idea makes her talk thus.

But the poor girl is silent, and puts her handkerchief to her face, holding it there with both her hands ; and her head is downwards, as if she were silently thinking. She is sitting at the moment, on her husband's knee ; and he believing her to be weeping, gently pushes her hands aside, and makes as if he would kiss her lips.

"No, William ; do not kiss me—at least not my lips," she says in an agitated whisper, a more than agitated whisper indeed, rather in a tone of intense anguish.

"You silly girl !" he laughs, "why don't you tell me this horrid dream of yours which seems to affect your nerves still ?"

"Ah, William, it is a horrid dream, and a waking one that I mean—one, too, that has left me unworthy to kiss your dear lips. God help me !" she cries hysterically.

But she is appalled at her own words when she finds his limbs tremble under her, and sees his face grow pale as alabaster.

"William, you will kill me if you look like that. Gracious God ! what have I been saying ? Listen," she cries, shaking him by the shoulder as if he were in a trance ; "listen and I will tell you all ; and how the villain insulted me—though he is her son ; aye, if he were an angel even."

"What did he do, Lucy ? say it in one word. This then is why you have been ill. Say it, though he were my own brother !" her husband says in a tone which freezes her very heart within her. She had believed she

knew all his tones ; but she had never heard this before.

“ Let me explain, William.”

“ Say it, madam,” he repeats fiercely. But seeing the effect of this harsh command, his heart smites him, and he continues, “ tell me all, my love—my poor, dear Lucy !”

“ But won’t you let me explain.”

“ Say it, I command you !”

“ He tried to kiss me, William !”

Chartres gets up. His presence of mind returns to him now he has heard that it is only this ; but he cannot all at once get over the sickening agitation of the past half minute. Yet while she prays him to be calm for her sake, and even before she has begun to relate the history of the insult, he forces himself to appear collected, lest her anxiety should be too much for her little share of strength.

She makes him sit down again, and takes her place by his side ; and then she tells him her story. Poor girl she plays the first part of her rôle very badly. For when just now she refused to let him kiss her lips, she quite overlooked the fact that he already had done

this half a dozen times, as he now does again to reassure and comfort her, while she tells him of that dreadful insult.

It had better be related in the author's words, for Lucy is a long time telling it, and with her husband commenting upon it.

It appears that the day Crowley brought the raspberries, he was, as Lucy had never seen him before, intoxicated; and after some foolish remarks on his part, he was insane enough to say something about loving her, and at the same instant attempted to kiss her lips; but as she was so agitated, it is just possible that it was only her hand to which he pressed his lips, inasmuch as the affair took place at the moment of Crowley's departure, when he was shaking hands with her. The whole thing occurred in a second of time, as Lucy said; and she had no power to speak, which Chartres could quite understand, for Lucy when frightened, generally lost the power of moving, and became like a cataleptic for a moment. When she found her voice, Crowley was gone; and about five minutes afterwards she saw him returning with an appearance of great contrition, and

as if he intended to make a humble apology. But after giving a gentle knock or two, which was of course unregarded, he went away.

This is the history of the gross insult, cleared of all verbiage and to and fro talk.

CHAPTER VII.

It is unnecessary to recount all, or even any of the absurd fictions with which the Melbourne folk astonished each other. Reprehensible as Crowley's conduct was, it was nothing more than has been done by many a drunken man. As to Lucy, she, poor thing, looked upon the matter in a light of her own. Her absurd talk about her lips being unworthy to be touched, shows this. She was indeed so over sensitive as to be pained at things which other and the most retiring ladies would have regarded almost as trifles. In fact she was morbidly sensitive; and it is not difficult to understand how such a girl would be thrown into a state of nervousness amounting almost to mania, after being the victim of a coarse insult. The fact that the insulter was the son of those people who had ever been so

kind to her and William—the son in whom all their pride and love was centred—made the matter even more painful than it would otherwise have been.

Lucy would not venture immediately to tell her trouble to her husband lest she should bring him away from his new and first success; and without advice, she dared not mention the matter to any one else, even to Annie Short, lest it should get spoken of and hurt the good Crowley people. Yet, through her husband's teaching, she was well aware of the danger a woman encounters in keeping such an affair secret. For if the evil-doer is the first to tell the tale, the silence of the victim may be construed viciously, especially by women. And in her dreadful dilemma is it any wonder that the poor, sensitive girl's presence of mind gave way altogether? Thus, too, on this account, Chartres is much troubled.

It is evident—from what the offender's mother has said—that Crowley has already been giving a version of his own concerning his conduct, not improbably manufacturing some plea that he had received encourage-

ment to act as he did. Now such a plea as this, made in connexion with the name of a well-known and respected lady in England, would at once be set down as a lie and a gross one, and would therefore only increase—even in the estimation of his own friends—the guilt of a fellow twenty fold. But alas ! in a new colony, the women are all as a rule not as they might be, and such as assuredly will be in another generation or two hence, when the turmoil of land-acquiring and money-making is not so all-absorbing, and leaves people more time and inclination for cultivating the mind instead of the pocket.

Europe does not send Australia her best women. There is no use in pretending she does ; indeed it is well-known that she rather sends America and Australia her worst. Fortunate the mater-familias who has been “engaged” or wedded in England ; and fortunate, too, thrice fortunate, the girl who comes out of the fiery furnace of emigration and unprotected life in the colonies unscandaled !

The women of Australia then are not such as they are in England. This is bad enough. But the dreadful prevalence of scandal in the

colonies makes matters worse than they really are. Unhappily the talk of a new colony is not such as English gossips are used to utter. It is broad and open, pointed and shocking, going to lengths — even against perfectly innocent persons — which elsewhere would only be hinted at. So dreadful is this scandal in the colonies, that many ladies are actually afraid to mix in society, although they may be fond of it, and lead the lives of recluses in their own houses rather than face the dangerous female world abroad.

The old Spanish proverb about the bird and its nest may here be thrown at my head for what I am now saying. “Why should I say anything at all about colonial society if I can’t say good?” I may be asked. And I reply, “I should not have said any thing either one way or another on the subject, if it had not been explanatory of what follows.” If such a gross insult had been given to a lady in London, her friends would probably have known how to deal with the offender. Seeing how matters are in the colonies however, there are few women who would not have been at a loss how to avenge themselves.

Here too is Chartres' difficulty. Is it much wonder, considering the unsettled state of his mind, that he acts hastily?

"Yes," he thinks, "it is evident that Crowley has been giving his companions his own version of the affair. It must be known too that Lucy had made no complaint until she had been as it were compelled to excuse herself! Half her female acquaintances will no doubt regard the matter in this charitable light!"

His first idea is to relate the whole affair to Mrs. Crowley. But Lucy conjures him not to grieve a mother by doing so; and he promises not to do it.

"If I can get the fellow to make a full apology in writing, and to retract whatever lies he has been telling, people may then see the insult to be as it probably was—the action of a man insane under the influence of unaccustomed intoxication."

"And he will apologise, William; I am sure he will, when he sees you."

Chartres walks up and down the room in an excited manner, much as he tries to conceal his agitation.

“Yes, Lucy. But the fellow’s talk—what he may have already said?”

Here is something beyond poor Lucy’s ken. “What he has already said, William? If he has been mad enough to mention his conduct, what could he say but everything against himself?”

“Against himself? Ah! Lucy, you little know how—” But he stops. This will never do. The mere picture of the insult as the world might view it from Crowley’s relation of it, might kill her! And William calms her by adding, “Perhaps the fellow has not after all done anything worse than vent his spite by calling me names.” And then he begs Lucy to go to her bed, and try and rest for an hour or two while he goes out to make some necessary purchases of mining utensils which must be forwarded directly.

Lucy seems to entertain some fear of—she knows not what.

“Why can’t you wait, William, and buy those things to-morrow, even the next day? For heaven’s sake, my darling, promise me you will do nothing rash!” And the poor girl trembles so that she can hardly stand.

“They are waiting on the diggings for the tools; and by sending them up by a waggon to-day, a great deal of inconvenience will be spared.” And much more explanatory talk ensues, so that Chartres can show the necessity he is under to go and make his purchases at once.

But Lucy is unsatisfied, and she gazes into her husband’s face, trying to read his very thoughts—gazes as a wife or mother only can at a beloved husband or child. “William, I am afraid you are going to see that man, your face—you are so agitated!” she says anxiously.

Chartres really could deceive her sometimes. He takes up his flute with great coolness, and begins examining the keys. “Did I not look agitated enough when I came home, my dear, before I heard a word about this Crowley? Surely a ride of a hundred and twenty miles in a hot wind is enough to take the calm and wise countenance away from any individual.”

This is true enough; and Lucy cannot contradict it.

But Chartres, to remove any lingering

doubts from her mind, deliberately gets paper, pen and ink, and sitting quietly down, he coolly begins writing out an imaginary list of the articles he has to purchase. While doing this, he incidentally, as it were, says that he will "sleep on" the matter of the insult for a night or two, before taking any step. This reassures Lucy ; and she leaves the room, not to rest, however, but to dress for the day.

It is in vain that after Chartres has washed and dressed himself after his journey, both Lucy and his good friend Mrs. Crowley press him to have some refreshment. All he takes is a cup of tea, assuring them that he is too fatigued to think of eating—at all events, until he comes home again in an hour or two and has a good sleep. Then he leaves his house, on the errand best known to himself.

It is a dreadful day—blowing a hot wind ; one of those days which remind the old colonist of that memorable "black Thursday," when the very birds dropped dead off the trees in the bush, destroyed by the furnace-wind. Bad as Chartres feels it outside, he is in infinitely less mental torture than

when playing the rôle of a calm man in-doors. He can now think of the wrong done him, and not remain forced to consider nothing else than the trick of his countenance before his wife. It is fortunate that the streets are well-nigh deserted, or he would certainly have attracted attention for the first few minutes after leaving his home. Even as it is, a couple of the salamandrine colonial youths, whom no hot winds seem at all to inconvenience, passing with a water-melon in their hands, actually whistle to each other when they notice his face. And the lad nearest to him, instinctively puts up his elbow and ducks his head, as boys do when they expect a cuff. Now Chartres is usually as calm and collected a man as one could meet, and has a well-nigh complete control over his passions. He is by no means a man to act on the impulse of the moment. But let it be remembered how much he has to bear with this day—enough to lay many a man on a bed of illness. His agitation for the past night, concerning Lucy ; his fearfully toilsome journey ; the want of rest ; the state of the weather—no small hurt to many a man—

and finally that worst of all, the insult to his wife ! Considering all these is it any wonder that he should be driven to act hastily, not to say rashly ?

And what is he about to do ? Even this, his confused mind has no power to decide upon, until he reaches one of the busy streets of Melbourne, and has rested awhile in a cool room, where he swallows a stiff tumbler of brandy and lemonade. Then he decides on finding Crowley, and making him write an apology—a full one, showing unmistakably the facts of the outrage, and laying the entire blame on the offender himself.

But should Crowley refuse to write the apology—what then ? This is Chartres' chief trouble.

John Crowley being very well known at all the sporting hotels in Melbourne, to these places, Chartres, of course, goes. The first three or four landlords know nothing more concerning him than that he is "on the drink." At other houses he has not been seen for several days past ; and thus there is no information of his whereabouts to be obtained at any of the hotels. Chartres then

proceeds to the police office and inquires there; but the constables can give him no tidings beyond what he already knows. He is just about to give over his search, when ill-fortune sets a policeman in his path as he goes homewards. "It's likely he may be at home in bed," suggests the unlucky constable, who knows the lawyer well; "he's been knocking about very bad for more than a week; and not being accustomed to the drink, may be he's took sick; for he couldn't stand many days the way he was going on." And thereupon Chartres goes to Mrs. Heal's, where Crowley resides.

The smiling widow, of course, knows him as an intimate friend of her lodger.

Chartres inquires "Is Mr. Crowley at home?"

"I'll see, Sir," Mrs. Heal replies; and thereupon Chartres knows his quest is ended; he indeed knows so well what "I'll see" means, that as Mrs. Heal leaves the room "to see," he stops her.

"It's all right, Mrs. Heal; I'm not likely, you know, to say a word about him to the old folk. I'm sure he'll be delighted to see *me*."

The good lady smiles and confesses. "You see, Mr. Chartres, he wouldn't for the world frighten the old people by letting them think he was taking a drop. He has been at home here and not left the house these five days ; and they have been sending inquiring about him. But he ordered me on no account to confess he was here. When he is off the drink he'll soon be right again."

"It is evident," Chartres thinks, "that from her not alluding to it, Crowley has been saying nothing of me to her ; and thus so far so good." And then he practises his pre-conceived *ruse*.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Heal, I am afraid I have been talking a little too much myself since I have been in Melbourne." This to account for his haggard appearance. "But what odds ? I'm a lucky man now, you must learn ; for I have found a jeweller's shop at the diggings ; so it doesn't much matter, even though I do look a little used-up to-day, eh ?"

"Bless you, Sir ; young men will be young men. Poor Heal used often to take a drop for mayhap a month or more at a time ; and yet I don't know as it ever done him much harm."

“And Mrs. Heal—listen. Now you, just for the fun of the thing, show me up to Mr. Crowley’s room! I’ll take him away to-night to the theatre, and make him end his knocking-about; I’ll bring him home again early; and we’ll put a good dose of laudanum in his porter, to make him sleep soundly. Is he shaky, here, at all?” pointing to his head.

Mrs. Heal understands the allusion. “Well, you see he’s a wild fellow enough, Mr. Chartres; and yet he is not a man to drink overmuch. At all events, I never see him before as he is now; and I do believe it has affected his reason a bit. I was talking to him after breakfast to-day, which was in his own room, and I don’t believe he ever took off so much as his coat or his collar all night; so you see I’m sure he’s a little affected; he is fidgety-like.”


“Do you mean that his mind appears affected by something else besides the drinking?” inquires Chartres, who had his own thoughts on the subject.

“That’s just what I was going to say, Sir. I’m sure he is fretting about something or other. I think, indeed, that he is on the

drink now to drown trouble. The day he began, there was a lot of 'em here together seeing him ; and one of them—you know the gentleman, Mr. Driscoll—was going to New Zealand ; and they was drinking his health. When they all went out they were ' pretty well on ; ' it was the first time I had ever seen Mr. Crowley so bad, at least, in the day time. He came home again about two o'clock, after lunch time, and I was sure something had come across him to vex him, he seemed so dreadfully down-hearted. Perhaps he had been foolish in his drink, and I know that would make him sorry. At all events, from that day until now, he has been drinking very bad and desperate like. But I hope you'll bring him round soon, now you're come, Sir ; for he's not a man for drink at all."

What a volume of intelligence there is in all this for Chartres to be guided by ! Had he been aided by a friend he would, indeed, in all probability, have been so guided. But as he many a time afterwards thought—he had his forecast actions to perform ; his fate was to be undergone.

And two minutes after the two men are face to face.



CHAPTER VIII.

CHARTRES as may be well understood, is blind with passion as to his mental vision ; but his bodily eyes cannot but open widely enough when he sees the man who is before him.

Crowley, on seeing his visitor, had started up, and now sits down again with a drunken show of hauteur. The brandy bottle he holds by the neck, mechanically gripped, as if for an instrument of defence. John Crowley is usually a fine healthy looking man ; but now he looks dreadful, indeed. Stupid, however, and almost idiotic as he appears, and watery and unmeaning as his eyes are, his face is still expressive enough to show that he is suffering great mental trouble. He is but half clad, without coat, vest, or collar, his bare feet are thrust into slippers, and he is unwashed and uncombed too. As he sits

there with the bottle under his hand, and his eyes downcast and studiously averted from Chartres, his head keeps nodding and his neck jerking, as if the weakened muscles hardly possess the power of sustaining the weight placed on them. Truly it has been a debauch with the unhappy man—a first and a cruel one. And Chartres feels his hard and stony anger to urge him less, as he looks on the sight before him.

“So, it’s you, Chartres,” Crowley mumbles, “it’s you; come to blow up a fellow all about nothing at all—about nothing in the world. Isn’t that it?”

“It is I, Crowley, come for my own sake, and I trust yours, too, to have an explanation of this disgraceful conduct of yours towards my wife.”

“Well, sit down, old man; sit down, and tell a poor fellow what he is to do.”

“As he seems to give in, and not to stand on the defensive,” Chartres thinks, “I had best take matters as quietly as possible. The written apology must be got by any means possible.”

“Crowley, I have come here to-day, to

“speak very seriously to you, and, in the first place, to ask you what you have been saying about me to people for the last week. I want also to get—what I hope you will see you had better give me—a full apology in writing for the wrong you have done me.”

“What I’ve been saying, old fellow—?”

“Wait and hear me out. I am willing to believe that at the time you called at my house you were under the influence of drink ; and I know that in such a condition some men who are not accustomed to it, are not very capable of discriminating right from wrong, or even sometimes capable of understanding in what company they are. I am willing to believe that you had momentarily forgotten who my wife was—for she says you were much intoxicated, and this for your father and mother’s sake.”

There is no question that Crowley doesn’t half understand this rather lengthy address. He catches the word apology, however, if nothing else.

“Upon my soul, Chartres, I’m very sorry, and all that, you know,” he stammers, “and there’s nothing in the world will give me

greater pleasure than to make you and your wife the most ample apology you can wish."

Surely this success is too great to be lightly completed! And in truth it is so.

As Chartres reaches some paper and pens off the little window-table, Crowley fills a tumbler of brandy and water, and mutters to himself "Pity she took it so much to heart—made a fuss about it."

And this irritates Chartres, even though it comes from such a source. He is fairly cut to the soul hearing the way Crowley speaks of his offence, just as if it were a mere game which had been lost. If he had been a cooler and wiser man, or a longer resident in Australia, he would have known that Crowley—a native's—estimation of females was very poor indeed. Few of the women among whom he had been brought up would have been thrown into a nervous fever by their hands being kissed. If colonial young men had the opportunity of knowing the best kinds of women, such as exist in England, they would respect female character much more than they actually do. Had Crowley ever lived in England he might have had as

high an estimate of women as possible. As it is, however, he has always judged by the evidence which has ever been before him.

"Fuss ! Sir !" cries Chartres, repeating the dreamily spoken words. "Do you dare talk before me in that manner. Do you imagine that my wife is one of those women of your own low class whom you have been accustomed to style ladies ? Or do you think—?"

"Sit down now ; sit down, Chartres. Upon my soul, I'm very sorry you know. I keep putting my foot into it. You mustn't take what I say amiss. I'll give you an ample apology, you know," Crowley says sleepily.

Be it remembered, that at the present moment he does not seem absolutely under the excitement of intoxication. His stupid manner is rather the effect of past than present drink. It is a pity that Chartres should follow the way of the world in becoming more exacting as his opponent becomes less pugnacious. But even the best among us are but game cocks, which, however, is better than being only dunghill ones.

"An apology ! yes, Crowley ; and I also require you to retract whatever you have

been saying about myself at your public-house bars."

Crowley slowly shakes his head. "I can't, old fellow, retract what I haven't said."

"You have said it. You have spoken against me on several occasions," Chartres angrily returns ; though what the "it" refers to, he does not know in detail himself. So much for anger !

"Have I? Upon my word, I can't recollect it. What have I said?"

"That is best known to yourself. I require, however, before I leave this room, an apology for it."

"But you can't tell me what I have said ; so I can't, you see, apologise—how the deuce can I?" This Crowley utters while pouring out another glass of brandy, and reaching across for paper and pens wherewith it would seem to write his apology for his insult to Lucy.

"Push us over that paper," he says.

And Chartres does so, expecting he is going to write at the moment, for he shows no signs whatever of doing otherwise.

"Look here now ; here's the apology I'm



going to give *you*. As to your wife, I will write an ample one to *her* when I am all right again."

And Crowley rends the half quire of note paper across the middle, and throws it down on the floor.

All this is done so quietly, or sleepily, or stupidly, and so much without the least appearance of excitement, that Chartres is fairly astounded, and sits silent for awhile in wonderment.

But he soon moves quickly enough ; for Crowley directly the paper is out of his hand, deliberately and with still imperturbable calmness or drunken stoniness, throws his half tumbler of brandy into Chartres' face.

Now this hot day Chartres carries a light sun umbrella, and it is still in his hand. "You scoundrel !" he cries, leaping from his seat and throwing his arms mechanically forward.

As to Crowley, he does not utter one word. He sits there stolidly. But his hands are not idle ; for as Chartres is wiping the scalding liquid from his blinded eyes, his opponent fills another glass out of the

brandy bottle, with the evident purpose of throwing it also. Chartres can half perceive the motions made in aiming it, and naturally puts out his arm to arrest them. Now Crowley has risen from his seat in order to be surer of his aim, and at the moment of launching the brandy into Chartres' face he stumbles forward, and comes upon the point of the umbrella which Chartres holds in his outstretched hand.

The unhappy man falls forward on the floor, overturning some chairs as he does so. And there he lies, to all appearance unable to move again.

"Would you blind me, you ruffian?" cries Chartres on this second attack; and he bends his head to avoid the shower.

Before he can well perceive what has exactly happened, the landlady rushes shrieking into the room. She has, in the manner of her tribe, been listening at the door, and hears this last exclamation of Chartres, or rather believes she has. The "Would you blind me, ruffian?" is "I'll blind you, you ruffian!" and it is important to remember this misconception.

Crowley's eye is bleeding profusely; and Mrs. Heal is beside herself with terror when she sees he doesn't move. Her screams soon bring the servant up-stairs, and the damsel instinctively adds to the uproar. It is some time before Chartres can calm them; but when he does so, he directs the girl to go for a doctor. He sees that Crowley's face is bleeding, and partly guesses what has occasioned this; but yet he has no idea of the injury really done to the man's eye, and orders a medical man to be sent for in reference to the intoxicated condition of Crowley, than to any hurt he has sustained. Then with a heavy heart he goes home.

He curses himself bitterly for his folly in driving the unfortunate man into a corner where he must stand at bay. "And now," he thinks, "my only hope is that when the fellow gets over his drunken spree, his father and mother will persuade him to do what I have asked him—write the apology about Lucy. After all, by heaven, I believe the unhappy man is really sorry for his fault; and I have been a great fool to drive him as I have done."

Before going home Chartres enters a barber's shop, and having previously bought a necktie and collar, he changes them for his wet ones, and thus puts away every mark of his recent conflict. Then he goes home, and ten minutes after entering his house, he is in a deep slumber, utterly exhausted by the toil and trouble of the day.

CHAPTER IX.

It is through the unfortunate Crowley's mother that Chartres first learned the mischief he had inadvertently been guilty of.

Mrs. Heal was quick enough in despatching information to Crowley's parents directly the accident happened. The messenger, a young girl, found them both away from their own home ; so as directed, she came to Chartres'. Here in the kitchen, cheerfully doing servant's work for her friends, the breathless girl saw the mother of the injured man, and she told her errand as excited girls will tell wondrous tales.

"Run, run, ma'am—Mrs. Crowley ! Come quick, for mercy's sake ! He's dying and has his two eyes put out by Mr. Chartres ; and he would like to see you before he dies !"

The good old lady didn't scream or faint,

or do anything foolish, awful as this intelligence was. She trembled violently as she put on her bonnet and shawl; and as she sought the cup wherewith to take a drink of water, the poor soul hesitated and stopped now and then, and fumbled a little among the things on the dresser as if her sight were going and coming at intervals. But she neither shrieked nor wept. Her darling boy wanted her assistance, and she acted. Now she could understand how it was that Chartres had left the house without taking any rest or refreshment.

“He promised to forgive and forget,” she said in a solemn whisper, as if she were appealing to a visible all-helping spirit, “he promised he would forgive him; and now he has killed my child, my own darling boy!”

Just at this moment Lucy happened to walk smiling into the kitchen to have a chat with her kind friend; and she was appalled at the despairing mother’s face. It was a fearful sight to the girl just out of a nervous illness!

“Mrs. Crowley—dear Mrs. Crowley—what—what is—”


“— May the Lord in heaven forgive him,” the agonised mother falters, “he has ruined my boy—blinded my child! Ah, dear Lord, support me!” and she was gone—running; the messenger after her.

Even in that moment of agony, the good creature had the truly Christian charity and surprising presence of mind not to exclaim what she herself feared, “he has killed my boy!” The motherly soul remembered Lucy’s weakness and respected it. Possibly by so doing, she saved her trembling friend many a long hour of illness.

Lucy, too, could now see why her husband had been so eager to leave home directly he had heard of the insult. It was well the poor invalid had the comfort and support of William’s presence, during those dreadful hours when she sat by his bedside. How shall we depict the agony of that apparent eternity! The little ones came home at five o’clock, and it was by talking to them of dear papa, and making them pray for him as he lay in his deep slumber that she was able to support her anguish at all. Of course she put the worst possible construction on the

affray. Crowley was mortally wounded—perhaps dead by this time. Perhaps William might have to expiate his crime on the scaffold! What horrors did not her mind—just recovered from its other shock—conceive! As the time slowly passed, every noise in the darkening street was a troop of police coming to arrest her husband! “Had there been a duel—how had Crowley been injured? Was William wounded?” But this last had been her first thought, and as he lay in his dead sleep she examined his body for marks of bullet wounds or stabs. Ah! what she suffered!

Love has its sacrifices, and great ones they often are. But we doubt whether any of them could be much greater than that one which Lucy made this evening in allowing her husband to sleep undisturbed. Had she awoke him, her mind could have been set at rest for the best or the worst. But he was worn out with fatigue and anxiety; and his safety and health were—next to her love—her paramount care. It was nine o'clock before he awoke; and instead of finding crying children, a disordered house, and a wife



in hysterics, which under the circumstances many a man would have found, he arose to a silent house, sleeping children, a neatly dressed and smiling wife, and a tea-table laid out with every little delicacy of the hot season on it.

The first words he said, when he heard what had happened, gave poor Lucy a new existence.


“Pooh! The fellow fell down because he was too drunk to stand. I don’t believe I have done him any injury beyond an abrasion of the skin.”

He felt deeply concerned, however, for all he might say. The point of the umbrella, he considered, might have entered the eye and injured the sight. What the messenger had said, showed, afterwards, this indeed to have been the case, though at the time the accident happened, he believed Crowley to have received no more than a slight wound on the cheek. Had he known that there really was some foundation for the messenger’s report of Crowley’s being blinded, he would have been a more unhappy man than he was that night.

CHAPTER X.

THREE days after the quarrel, Chartres and his little household were on their way to the gold-fields. John Crowley was lying on a sick-bed suffering from acute inflammation of the eye ; and his case was still more serious, from the effects of a general break-down of the system consequent on his long-continued drinking-bout.

“If he is going to arrest me,” Chartres said to his wife, “he can do so as well on the diggings as in Melbourne. In the meanwhile, I shall be earning some money ; and in our new home you will have Masham to protect you and the children, if I am taken from you for a while. He can see after my interests on the spot too. They shan’t construe my returning to my work into running away. When they want, they shall know



where to find me." And he sent his name and address to the Metropolitan Police office.

Before removing from Melbourne, he had not seen either of the elder Crowleys. It was not the time, he considered, to go peace-making. But he learned all particulars concerning his opponent, from a mutual friend, a Mr. Nichols. As to the account of the fracas which Crowley gave to his father and mother, Nichols was not sure whether the sick man had charged Chartres with wilfully injuring him or not. But he related that Mrs. Heal still held to her first assertion—that she had distinctly heard Chartres cry, "I'll blind you, you ruffian!" Now the fact was, that the foolish woman either had not the moral courage to allow she was mistaken, or that she had made the same assertion so many times, that she at length believed it herself. She evidently had no thought of the mischief she was doing.

It would have been a great relief to Chartres, if Crowley had at once summoned him before a magistrate. In that case, he felt confident he should have been able to prove the wounding accidental. He would


also have had the opportunity of showing that Crowley had been the aggressor. In fact, as a *tu quoque*, he could have prosecuted him for the insult to Lucy. In the event of the case going against him, Chartres would of course have had to pay a fine of five or ten pounds; and this, with the payment of the medical expenses of the wounded man, would have doubtless ended the matter. But Crowley was determined to go to work in a more important manner. He intended taking a civil action, through which he expected to recover five or six hundred pounds damages. It was this that lay heavy at Chartres' heart—his ruin seemed possible; for Crowley would assuredly recover some damages, and these, with Australian law-costs—English ones are bad enough—might amount to more than he could hope to pay. And then, worse and worse, he might not for several months be able to get out of a debtor's prison to support his family. However, he hoped for the best; his late unaccustomed stroke of good fortune enabled him to do so. One great relief to his mind was, that he had done no harm intentionally.

He was now on his journey, and with his good fortune before him, in the shape of his golden hole, he was enabled to leave much of his care behind in Melbourne. His furniture had been sent on before in a waggon ; and please fate, in another fortnight's time, a nice little four-roomed weather-board cottage, and quarter of an acre of garden ground, cleared and fenced, would be his comfortable little home. Had it not been for Crowley's affair, this prospect would have aided him to be as happy a man as could be. Even as it was, he and his charges all enjoyed their journey prodigiously.

To Lucy and the children the journey was a prolonged pic-nic. The eldest of the two youngsters—a William of course—now eight years old, was as good as a man. He fed the house nightly ; for at Lucy's request, and for the romance of the thing, they camped out every evening : carried the water, collected the sticks, while papa arranged the vehicle for a bedroom, and boiled the kettle. Chartres used, by camping time, to be pretty well fatigued, guiding and leading the horse over a rugged road from sunrise ; and little

Willie helped him well. By the time the meat was cooked, the tea made, the eggs boiled, and substantial viands ready, the sun would be on the horizon, and the meal would be discussed with a gusto which a dyspeptic would give twenty pounds a dinner to possess. Then while papa hobbled the horse after his feed, belled him, and with Charley the terrier took a turn round the bush to see in what direction he was likely to wander, the two boys were snugly tucked into their bed ; and by-and-by the old bush would echo with a sweet song from Lucy, or a tune from Chartres' flute ; and no doubt the birds would wonder at the sweet sounds which awoke them in their early nap. Even the cunning old mare of " Jimmy the General," would come up near the performers and soberly crop the grass as she listened to the music.

Their tea and song over, Chartres and his wife would go to bed ; and ten minutes afterwards fall into a dreamless sleep to wake no more until sunrise, except the faithful old mare came in the night sniffing at the vehicle, or treading amongst the pots and pans ; when



a few stones would have to be showered upon her. About an hour before day, when Chartres jumped down out of his wheeled bed, the mare never failed to salute him with a loud neigh, and his dog with a joyous bark. Then the first thing was to give the former her corn, the next to put the fire together, and the water on to boil. These done, a pop or two might be had at the ducks on the water—which, of course, lay near every camping place—and by the time an all-over wash, or a swim was performed, he was sure to hear some laughing voices through the cool morning air, and the boys would run to him to pluck the game if there were any. By-and-by mamma—after having packed up everything for the day—would soberly step down from her room; and while Chartres put the harness on the mare, the eggs, meat, or game and tea would be ready, and thereupon all would sit down to their hearty breakfast in the cool perfumed morning air.

Breakfast over, papa would put to the horse, and the children would feed "Charley" on meat fit for any king's table; and then the edibles would be stowed away in the food

box. Then all would mount their vehicle, papa would light his pipe; a crack of the whip, a peal of barks from "Charley," and the home of a happy night was left behind.

The journey being so arranged that water would be reached about noon, the travellers would camp then for an hour or two while the horse was fed; and then, dinner over, away they would go again until an hour before sundown. And oh, those glorious travellers' repasts! True *epulæ epularum*, which are worth an epicure's while crossing the oceans to assist at. Talk of the pleasures of good champagne! They are as nothing compared to the pleasures of a bush traveller's digestion. A forest dinner during assimilation might be a worthy theme for Anacreon. He sang of wine; why did he not sing of a healthy and satisfied stomach? But, poor fellow, he never travelled in Australia!

As there was no need to hurry, Chartres purposely lengthened out that journey of two hundred and thirty miles; lengthened it out for a week. Using a vehicle, they had to go by the regular road, although the bridle path by which Chartres had just gone and returned

to Melbourne was little more than half that distance. Oh ! that delightful journey, it was beyond all comparison the pleasantest trip Chartres and Lucy had ever taken together ! Do not most of us remember with peculiar satisfaction some excursion, let it have been only for a few hours, which we have once made in our youth ? William and Lucy never remembered that journey but with the utmost pleasure. It was an oasis in the memory of both husband and wife in after years.

CHAPTER XI.

THE new road immediately entering the township was not yet formed, though men were hard at work on both it and the telegraph line. Lucy and the boys had to ride on horseback for the last few miles among the mountains. Chartres' household goods were to follow on pack-horse in a day or two, until which it was probable that Mrs Wilkins would afford her friends house room. Independently of this good lady's real generosity, she dearly loved the company of a born and bred lady ; and she would certainly be glad enough to exhibit Mrs. Chartres as her guest for a few days.

As he walked along, leading his wife's horse, Chartres was surprised to find that the newly surveyed road passed close to his claim.

"Ah, Lucy ! there is my bank !" pointing to the excavation ; and Lucy joyously looked at it. She had never until now seen diggings, and was surprised at the heaps of white earth lying round the shafts.

"And that is where you won the sixty pounds, William ?"

"That is the eventful spot, madam. And there, too, in that small dark heap on this side, lies a good many ounces of the yellow metal, which I hope we shall wash out on Friday."

"And then, William, you must be as lucky again, and find another jeweller's shop ! You see I know all the miners' talk already."

"I am afraid I shall find no more golden holes ; for I hear the lead has quite run out ; and every yard of good ground is taken up now. However, our puddling machine will carry us on well for a year or more, until new ground is opened." Then, as he turned to look back, he said, "I don't see Masham or Sam ; I wonder what they are doing ?"

Lucy suggested that they might be in the shaft.

"Or, probably, Sam is drinking," Chartres

guessed, "and Masham can't get on without his help."

"Please God, William, that is all!"

"Why do you say that so seriously, Lucy?" asked her husband, speaking however, quite as gravely himself.

Lucy smiled. "Did I speak seriously, William? I suppose it was only my way, that is all."

It was no doubt a coincidence; but at that moment Chartres felt as apprehensive of he knew not what, as man could feel. And he was glad to occupy his own mind and Lucy's too, with pointing out the various objects of interest round about.

Just as they reached the beginning of the main street, who should come bustling by but John Wilkins? He took off his hat quite *en gentleman* to Lucy, and welcomed her cordially to the gold fields.

"Thank heavens, Chartres, you are come," he hurriedly says. "They all tell me that you haven't your digging license—have you?"

Chartres' heart gave a great throb, and seemed to sink down to the ground.

"Good God ! No. I didn't think, as Sam had his, that it was—"

"—Run, then !—I'll fetch Mrs. Chartres to my house—go and get your license as fast as you can. The office will close in five minutes. Then come to me !" Chartres went without a word.

"Where is he hurrying to, Mr. Wilkins ?"

"He is going to get what he should never have been without—his license."

Poor Lucy did not comprehend this. She however could see that some great crisis was at hand ; and her breath came thick and fast.

"Oh ! Mr. Wilkins, can I do nothing to help him ?" she asks anxiously.

"No, my dear lady," John answered. "You just come home with me to Margaret, and have a cup of tea with her. She will tell you all about this matter just as well as I can myself." And Wilkins hurried on the horse—that carrying the children and in charge of a man following.

They got to the house ; but Wilkins waited there only long enough to help Lucy to alight. Then he called to one of his men to

take the lady and her children inside, and to let Mrs. Wilkins know they were arrived.

"I can't wait a moment, my dear," he said, talking as if he were a grave old man—but was he not a J.P.? "I must run off to the court-house and see justice done."

At this instant Chartres and Masham came up from different directions. They were both nearly breathless.

"I was too late to get the license, Wilkins," Chartres faltered. "What is the matter? what had I best do?"

"Come over with me to the court-house," Wilkins began.

"I have got the license for you long since," Masham interrupted, "and your case is in a good lawyer's hands. I have done all man could do, William, heaven knows."

And the three men hurried away.

Lucy had stood there transfixed with astonishment; but neither Masham nor her husband had had time to notice her. She heard what they said though; and as she thought upon it, Margaret Wilkins came out and gave her a genuine Australian welcome.

"I won't tell you one word of this legal

nonsense until you have taken off your bonnet, and had a cup of tea," she laughingly said in answer to Lucy's anxious inquiries.

But seeing Lucy standing there with eyes dilated and hands pressed together, and apparently too much agitated to move, Margaret added,

"It's only some discussion about their bothering claims, that's all."

Lucy gave a deep sigh of relief; and her large eyes closed as she instinctively bowed her head in gratitude to her Creator, murmuring her heartfelt thanks to Him. Beautiful as she was in feature, her movements were even more so; and the very outward show of her emotions were the visible acts of an innocent and confiding heart—a heart trusting in the guidance of those wiser than herself, and above all in Him whom in sorrow or joy she never ceased to adore.

Seeing Mrs. Wilkins making so light of the dispute, she naturally thought it must be something concerning the shape and size of the claim; or one of those technical matters about which men are so particular, though they often do not involve the question of

much money. She knew that men made a great affair about things involving abstract rights. And thus she heard her hostess rattle away about herself and everybody else, and was able to at least make a show of answering cheerfully enough.

True to her first assertion, the lively Margaret refused to speak about the law affair until some rest and refreshment had been taken ; and the inevitable colonial cup of tea soon being ready, she and Lucy sat down to it.

By the way, where was Jemima all this time? Out at the creek catching cray-fish with some *other* children ! And this art consists in letting down a bit of meat tied to a string to ensnare the crustaceans, just as the small boys do in England to catch those wretched little watery crabs !

"I am so glad, my dear Mrs. Chartres, you have come up here to reside," Margaret rattled on. "It will be so pleasant for me, I'm sure, to have a friend I can talk to ; for on these diggings I don't think there was one other lady than myself, before you came here. The women are brutes—really brutes ; and indeed they are so on every gold field."

Lucy of course said she was sorry to hear this. And her friend went on—

“Now, you know, you need not reside in this nasty township, because you are not in business. You must make Mr. Chartres take up a residence allotment a little way off; and thus you will be away from all unpleasant sights, sounds, and dust.”

“Are there no respectable people here whom one can speak to, or visit?”


“Plenty of men, my dear, many of them of *our own* station. But of ladies, there is not one whom we should care to know. By-the-by though, there is a poor woman who lives just up the hill at the back of this house, in a bark-hut, and who is a military officer’s wife. Her husband sold his commission before emigrating, and they have five children and no half-pay.”

“And they are very poor?”

“Yes, the unfortunate woman is so wretchedly off that I don’t believe she has a decent gown; and I’m quite sure she has no bonnet.”

“God help her!”

“Yes, my dear; and the poor children run



barefoot, though they are as pretty creatures as one would wish to see."

"But how is it that they are so poor in a country like this, where a labouring man can earn six or eight shillings a day even working on the roads?"

"My dear, I see you don't understand. Very few men, unless those accustomed to it from their youth, can work steadily at manual labour—that is do enough work in a day to satisfy an employer."

"But they can dig on their own account."

"Very true, my dear ; and digging is comparatively easy labour, for a man can rest when it suits him. But then, you know, he must be a successful digger, or he cannot earn much. Now, poor Captain Milford has never been successful. He makes one year with another just about what most diggers make—about a pound a-week, that is, a bare subsistence. He deals at our store, and has done so for more than a year past ; and when times are very bad, as they are now with him, John gives him credit. He always pays faithfully, either in money or labour ; indeed

he helped to put up a new room to this house in payment of an account."

"Poor fellow! Has he never found a good claim at all?"

"Never, my dear. In fact, after all, it is only the chosen few who do hit upon good ground now-a-days. Ten years back, things must have been very different; for I have heard people say that at that time they wouldn't wash up any ground which ran less than eight or ten ounces to the load; and that would be considered a small fortune now."

"Couldn't one ask poor Mrs. Milford to spend a quiet evening at one's house?"

"Well, my dear, the fact is that I invited her once. But she made me feel as uncomfortable as she was herself. I was really ashamed of a common silk dress I happened to have on before her, poor thing, with her patched and worn calico skirt. I don't think she would care, indeed, to be invited out. Poor creature! We can see her from this window any morning, chopping her firewood and washing out her and her children's miserable rags of clothing."

Now this was not by any means an encouraging story to a non-labourer's wife like Lucy. "Why," she suggests, "couldn't they try teaching?"

"They have, my dear ; but her five children, and her want of system, soon stopped her. And to tell the truth, poor Captain Milford is very fond of a drop when he can get it ; and, unfortunately, he will drink in the daytime as well as at night. So the school project soon foundered."

Lucy brightened. "Then after all, he could do better if he were a sober man?"

"Unquestionably he could, my dear. In the long run, such a steady man, such as my John is, can't help doing well in this country. He needs never—John says—want a home and plenty to eat, except for a few weeks at a bad time."

"That is a great comfort to know," Lucy said, with a sigh of relief.

Margaret Wilkins noticed the sigh, and remarked, "You seem to take the Captain's case a good deal to heart, my dear. But when you have been on the diggings a little time, you will hear of many gentlemen like

him. Fortunately, they are usually bachelors."

"I was just thinking that Captain Milford's lot might be poor William's."

"Pooh, my dear! People like you could never fall so low. Mr. Chartres is a man altogether of a different stamp to these poor creatures."

"Heaven grant he will ever remain so!" Lucy ejaculated. And then she blushed at the idea of having expressed any doubts concerning William in presence of another woman. And she stammered, as she observed Margaret Wilkins regarding her instinctively. "I—I—mean, I trust Mr. Chartres may always have his health. It would be such a fearful thing were he to become an invalid!"

"An invalid? Why I have been lately noticing that he looked a hundred-fold stronger and handsomer than he was even in England. My dear soul, you ought really to be jealous of him; for I declare he is the most interesting looking man I have seen——"

And here there was an interruption, for a sound of feet in the passage was heard.

"But," added Margaret Wilkins, who had



not altogether forgotten her old English method of expressing herself. "But talk of the old gentleman, and he appears!"

And into the room comes Chartres, Wilkins, Masham, and Lawyer Hughes.

The ladies stood up, and Hughes was duly introduced to Mrs. Chartres. He showed his surprise in his face, as most men did when they saw Lucy's uncommon style of beauty, and heard her sweet voice for the first time.

Ned Masham never took his eyes off him while he spoke to her. Indeed, if poor honest Ned had been the lady's husband, and a jealous one to boot, he couldn't have looked much differently to what he did. To tell the truth, Ned was always jealous as to what strangers might think of his dear friends—both husband and wife. "I wonder now," he thought, "whether Hughes thinks she is only like the common run of colonial women, or whether his acuteness makes him perceive her to be the pure and innocent being she really is, and as millions of her sex in England are?"

But the lawyer didn't say much to anybody, except to express a hope to Mr. Chartres that

she and his wife—now in Melbourne—might soon become acquainted.

Lucy, in the excitement of making one new acquaintance, and meeting two old ones—all of them men—didn't observe the peculiar expression of her husband's features, until Wilkins and Hughes had gone out into the store to talk about some law business ; when she did observe him, she saw, alas ! something like that well-known old hopeless look on his face. She knew that something heart-rending to her dear husband had happened, and her faithful heart bled as she tried to smile, and went over and sat beside him. Masham and Mrs. Wilkins, who were now most intimate friends, were talking in a low voice about Chartres' case.

"I think, Mrs. Wilkins," Masham suggested, "that our friends would like to be left awhile by themselves to talk over their affairs. Shall I go away, or——"

"Stay a while," she quickly replied ; and she turned and addressed Chartres. She had even more than an ordinary woman's share of quickness. "Now, Mr. Chartres, you had better run away into the other room, and

tidy yourself after your dusty journey. Mrs. Chartres will show you the room. I'll take care of the children."

Lucy thanked the vivacious little woman with a grateful glance. She saw why she and William and the children were to be alone, and her heart sank with apprehension.

William made no remark. He rose without a word and followed his wife. They reached the room ; and then Chartres quietly locked the door, and took his trembling wife in his arms. She pillowed her head close against his shoulder, and she felt his chest move and struggle beneath her face, as if it were a thing of independent life and limb. Her tears flowed ; but there was not this relief of weeping for him. He was only silent, as he bent over her and pressed his face against her head. She could feel the face quivering, too, as she could feel the chest heaving. But no words came either from him or her for a few agonised moments. She had nothing to say, and he could not trust himself to speak.

At last the struggle was over. He said

with despairing calmness, "I am a marked man, Lucy ; there is no doubt of it."

"Ah ! William, what is the matter ? For God's sake, don't talk like that !"

"Can I help talking like this, my darling ? We are ruined. That villain Sam has sold my claim, and gone away !"

"Sold it, William ? But you surely can get it back ?"

"That is what I have been trying to do to-day ; but the case was given against me. I had no license."

"What is that, my darling ?"

But Chartres could not explain all this now. He went on as if she had not spoken : "No license ! I have lost all for the sake of five shillings. Ah ! Lucy, fate, fate. Yes ; there is no doubt of it."

His despairing tones pierced Lucy's heart more, far, than the knowledge of their ruin did.

"And is it definitely settled, my poor darling, that you have lost all ?"

"Settled, Lucy, now by the law as it had been long before by Destiny. The judge said I had no hope whatever."

Lucy had not much consolation to offer. What could she say?

"I cannot even punish the robber," Chartres said bitterly. He was only a man, and as one, would have liked his revenge.

But Lucy made no remark upon this. She instinctively threw herself on the promises of her God, the Great Consoler.

"Trust in the Lord, my poor darling," she said appealingly. "Oh! do; you know what He says, 'Come unto me and I will give you rest.'" And she put her arms round his neck and gazed beseechingly into his gloomy face, praying him to seek comfort where she herself knew she had so often found it.

"Ah! Lucy," he said, as he pressed his face again to her upturned brow. She felt his arms tremble and his bosom rise for an instant as if he were softened; and she believed he really could find comfort where she told him it was always to be found. But he spoke a moment afterwards, and as his words came, his arms grew steadier again and his chest ceased straining.

"You talk like a psalm-singing Methodist,

Lucy," was all the answer the weeping wife received ; and William sat down gloomily and buried his face in his hands, not weeping though, not praying ; but cursing his fate.

But Lucy, miserable as she felt about pecuniary troubles, had at all events, no lower depth of care to fall into in thinking that from what her husband had just said abruptly, he loved her the less, even for one moment. She had long ago and often proved that the proverb "where poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window," did not hold good in her case. No, she had no fear about William's love; but she had enough, heaven knows, about his prospects; and in her life, before that day she had never felt so bitterly for her poor husband. She thought, as she sat down in that noiseless room silently by William's side, that her cup of misery could in this world never be fuller than it then was.

Alas! we know that miserable as we may be, there are others who can still be more miserable.

Chartres' case may be told in a few words. Diggers must every year take out a mining-license, price five shillings ; without this they

cannot lawfully dig or hold a claim. The law is especially strict on this point ; so strict indeed that it has engendered, and even encourages the existence of a sort of civil power termed "jumpers," the business of whose lives it is to discover flaws in the titles of fortunate diggers, and take possession of their ground. Claims worth as much as ten thousand pounds a-year have thus changed owners.

Now Chartres had not thought it necessary to take out a license. True he had once questioned Sam on the subject ; but this arch rascal, having from the first roguery in his head, had assured him that as he (Sam) held a license, it was not necessary that Chartres, being his partner, should have one as well. "One was enough," the villain assured Chartres. And so indeed it was ; for the rogue was thus the sole legal owner of the claim.

As to Masham—all he could relate about the difficulty was, that one morning going as usual to work, and expecting Sam to follow, he found four men on the ground. They showed him Sam's receipt for four

hundred pounds. It was nothing to them, they said, about Chartres. They had been told by the seller that "he was the sole proprietor of the claim, as he had bought out his mate." They had paid their money, and now they must have their money's worth. Masham's eyes were opened in a moment; and he saw that they had been well instructed by Sam as to Chartres having no license. But he could do nothing. When he returned home, he surely enough found that Sam had fled, having carefully paid up all his outstanding debts, lest he should be arrested as an absconding debtor, and brought back within reach of Chartres' vengeance. When Ned spoke to his friends about this villainous affair, the first question asked was, "Had your friend a license?" Masham of course answered, "no."

"Then it's all U-P with him, poor fellow," said Masham's landlord. "I was afraid Sam would '*do*' him somehow or other; and many a time I have cautioned him to be on the watch."

Masham at once took out a license in Chartres' name, put the case in a lawyer's



hands, got an injunction against the claim being worked ; and this is why Chartres and Lucy saw no men working on the spot when they had passed it on their road up.

Of course letters had at once been directed to Chartres about the matter. But fortunately he had left Melbourne before they arrived there. Fortunately indeed ; for his ignorance of his ruin allowed him to have a week's happy journey on his road to his new sphere of action.

The case came before the Warden for trial on the day of William's arrival at the diggings, with what result we know. And now the whole matter has been explained.

CHAPTER XII.

A MONTH has passed since that greatest of Chartres' misfortunes ; and it will be as well to explain the position in which the characters of this little history now stand. Father was still at his friend's station ostensibly on a visit, but in reality as a teacher to his guest's children, and doing his work in the only good manner, namely orally. In fact such astonishing progress did his pupils make under his enforced system of tuition, that another squatter in this neighbourhood sent his sons daily to be taught with Mr. Drummond's ; and the parents between them insisted on giving their sons' tutor an honorarium of ten pounds a quarter (!) this being a not very grand outlay on their part, however helpful it was to father.

Father's eyesight continued rapidly improv-

ing ; much to the astonishment of the doctors, who set it down to the influence of the densely oxygenated atmosphere of the colony, such was the theory. And although he could not yet see to read, yet he could well perceive objects as small as a nut, and even some kinds of colour. With the help of his attached pupils, moreover, he continued quietly carrying on experiments in meat-curing, at which he averred, he became more successful every week. Indeed father's mind and energy were wonderful. He was, however, only like many merchant-princes in this respect. He was always speculating ; and now his sight was returning he began putting his theories into practice. Should his endeavours prove successful, he and everybody else knew that there was a fortune before him.

As to John Crowley, his eye was still bad, and he was obliged to remain indoors. Concerning his action—he had served a writ on Chartres, and filed his declaration wherein he had laid his damages for temporary loss of sight, &c., &c., at a thousand pounds. The action was in the Supreme Court at Mel-

bourne, and would come on for hearing about two months' hence.


Foxy Sam, we may relate, has never since been heard of; and was supposed to have fled to "fresh groves and pastures new."

Chartres was still on the diggings; but in what a different condition to that in which he had expected to be!

The ground first opened on these diggings was not as yet worked out. But, with the exception of a good spot here and there, no new ground of any consequence had been found. This was like many other rushes—a good lead but a short one. Indeed, poor Chartres' claim three weeks after he lost it, afforded its owners upwards of sixteen hundred pounds worth of gold; and it was not yet exhausted.

Masham had never been lucky enough to find any gold at all, and now to make matters worse he was laid up with an almost fatal attack of rheumatic fever. Lucy was his nurse, for he lived with the Chartreses; and here was another bond of union between the two men.

And, now, let us suppose still another



month passed. Masham was now able to work a little ; and he and Chartres went "prospecting" daily—that is, searching for new and auriferous ground. It will be remembered that at the time Chartres had been ruined, he had just received one hundred and twenty pounds, that is to say, sixty pounds which he won by his syphon, twenty-two pounds his share of the nugget, and thirty-seven pounds the half proceeds of the first washing-up. Out of this, about fifty pounds went in payment of sundry accounts in Melbourne. With the remainder he had purchased his wagonette and harness ; and then after expenses of living and those of purchasing many necessities for his new mode of life, there remained only about fourteen pounds in hand, with which to begin the world anew.


Of course all hope of being able to set up a machine had to be abandoned. No house either could be built. A tent which he had brought up from Melbourne, as a mere adjunct to his intended cottage, had now to serve for a home. Masham had put up a little bark mia-mia of his own to sleep in ; and he

boarded with Chartres. Seeing thus that Chartres was so poor, it may be asked how did he manage to live during these two months? Partly on the fourteen pounds, partly on the sale of some of his furniture, which was stored at Wilkins'.

Poor Lucy now knew what it was to be an unsuccessful digger's wife; and her husband was, she feared, rapidly losing all his newly revived hope and energy, under his accumulation of misfortunes.

She, good creature, much as she suffered on her own and the children's account, grieved still far more acutely on her own dear husband's. What care she took to disguise her own sorrows before him; and what ever-sollicitous attention she paid to all his little wants, so as by some means to lighten his load of trouble! Did she fancy his appetite was failing? There was always some little delicacy made for him. Many a time did she deny herself almost necessities, so that her dear William should have dainties.

As may be imagined, the housekeeping had to be kept very close; and often did Lucy deny herself and the children their



share of expensive articles, such as milk, and eggs, and butter, in order that they might be made into rare dishes for William. It was only by accident that he discovered how badly off the affectionate girl was even for clothing. Did he repine at seeing the children in their worn shoes, carefully picking their steps over the rugged ground ; it was she who laughed at it, and affirmed that the children would grow up all the hardier if they went bare-footed altogether. Often did he tell her to get new clothing at Wilkins' ; but she as often would say, "No, not yet." For although Wilkins would not refuse to give them credit, yet she knew how soon an account might be run up, large enough to swamp any stroke of moderately good fortune when it did come.


"So long as we have food to eat, my dear, the children and their mother will be happy if they but see you so. Let us put up with our troubles patiently, and please God, my darling, O please the merciful God, we shall do well yet ! Who knows what to-morrow may bring us ?"

And this good, patient wife actually made it part of the business of her life to collect tales

of digging adventures, wherein men with their last shilling in their pockets, had suddenly come upon fortunes. Yes ; she made it her care to tell her husband about such really true cases, in order to recruit his flagging energy, and strengthen his rapidly declining hopes.

Is 'it any wonder that a man who could appreciate the worth of this girl, should love her as few husbands do love ? And William did love her indeed. It was for her dear sake that he suffered so much under his difficulties ; had he been alone, he would not have repined on his own account. But all success was regarded rather as a reward, solely for her than for himself as well, and he could not bear to see her suffer. Indeed, through this feeling it was that at those times when he required to use all his forces against evil fortune, as an enemy to be conquered—at those very times it was, that seeing her in distress, and brought down low in the world with him, he often became almost despairing.

Well, the third month after the cruel downfall has come on ; and it is now evident that something more definite than mere prospecting on one's own account must be done, in



order to find the means of supporting a family. Had Chartres been a bachelor, he would doubtless have gone to some other gold field, where there was "poor man's ground," or at all events, a better prospect of earning a livelihood. The place he was living on still bore a good name, for the original ground still yielded good returns ; some good quartz reefs had lately been struck, and the "knowledgeable ones" held out strongly that with "prospecting" round the neighbourhood, as good, or even better ground than that first discovered, would be found. Consequently, all those who had houses—those who had wives and families, and many single men, who still owned a few pounds wherewith to live, were loth to move away to any distant diggings. All daily looked to striking on this new payable ground ; and Chartres was among the rest. True, he sometimes latterly spoke of going away somewhere else to try his fortune ; but Lucy always strenuously set her face against his doing so. Masham asked her the reason of this, and her answer was—


"I know William would be miserable if he

were away from even this poor home, and met with no good fortune. I would not just now, for the world, let him go away among strangers, where if he were ill or in trouble he would have no one to care for him," and so on in this strain.

She always ended by making Ned promise that he would use his influence to persuade William to stay where they were for some time longer, or that if he did remove, he would at all events take her and the children with him.

One eventful Sunday morning, as they were all sitting under the shade of the trees in front of the tent, Lucy said with a great show of mystery, "I am going to try a new way of making money to support us until we strike upon a grand new lead ; and if you two men will set to work and put me up a bark building about twenty feet long, you will see what I shall do."

But they learned what she was about to do in about five minutes afterwards. And the two men did set to work ; and in a week's time a capital bark school-room thirty feet by twenty was built ; and by the end of a fort-



night fitted up roughly with desks and forms.


And what was the upshot of the scheme and the fortnight's work? A very good one, for the school at once brought Chartres and his pushing little wife the means of living until some new rush was made.

And thus Chartres and his wife became school teachers at the munificent remuneration of sixpence to a shilling per scholar per week; and in so becoming, they found themselves a kind of slaves to all the tag-rag and bob-tail of the diggings. They liked the income well enough. It supported them, and bought the children some new clothing; but as to their work, they were unutterably disgusted with it. It was the first and only time they were brought into close contact with the children of the lower order of diggers.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was a very orderly public-house with a billiard-table on the diggings, called the "Dublin Castle Hotel," which the two friends used occasionally to drop in at. They went there one Saturday evening, and found it, as usual, pretty full of customers. Most of the more respectable miners frequented this house, and the most considerable men of the township as well—the storekeepers, doctors, lawyers and civil servants ; and here whatever news there was stirring was to be heard.

There were two medical men in the township, both hard drinkers ; but one of them, named Corway, was an old and a seasoned toper. He was a good billiard player, moreover, and beyond all local competition the king of the cue. To-night, as Chartres could see from where he stood at the bar, there



was an unusual stir in the billiard-room, and quite a crowd round the table.

"There seems some special play going forward this evening," he remarked to a bystander.

"Yes, there is, I can promise you," was the response. "There is a game between the Doctor and old 'Short-and-Sweet,' as they call him."

"Short-and-Sweet! who the deuce is he?"

"A fellow not long come up from Melbourne."

Chartres determined to see this new celebrity, and as he slowly made his way towards the billiard-room, a voice rings in his ears,

"Aha! old boy, I had ye there. Put a nose into the hook of the leviathan, you know—or a hook in his nose, and lo! what will——"


"By all the gods, it is Short!" cried Masham, who heard the voice too. "What in the world is he doing up here?"

"Good heavens, Masham, only for the voice I could not have recognised him!" Chartres said, astounded.

“Nor I either,” Masham said, astounded too.

And no wonder. Poor, cheerful, once handsome Philip Short, was in truth a fearfully altered man. He was but a mere parody on his former self; an unpleasant one too, to tell the truth! Young as he still was, his hair was nearly grey; his every movement was that of the habitual drunkard; his once handsome face was positively unpleasant to look upon now! But have we not all seen the like? The fishy eyes, the bloated body, the pinched in nose of the hourly toper; his scarlet spotted cheeks and his nose covered with its scaly skin! Such was poor Short. But at the present moment he seemed as light-hearted as ever he had been, so Chartres was encouraged to go over and speak to him. As he drew near, Short recognised him and seemed as if he felt ashamed at his condition; seemed, I say, for it may have been only seeming. All men know when they are raised; few can perceive when they are lowered.

Short protested he was delighted to meet his old friend, and so he appeared to be as



far as words went ; but there was no heart in them. They were only the stereotyped salutations which one public-house acquaintance gives to another ; and still worse they were but the wordy welcome of the selfish, heartless drunkard, offered to the man who seemed to give sure promise of a glass or two of brandy. The drunkard has no love to bestow, and he instinctively feels that no one cares about him. All the ties of his friendship are contained in a tumbler, and all his affections are centred in himself.

Chartres was much shocked. He didn't venture to speak of old times. Afraid of treading on insecure ground, he didn't say a word either of the college or of Annie. As to Short's history, he saw it all in his nose ; and there he was content to leave it to-night.

The game went on, and Philip, never long silent, cracked his jokes as of old, pausing in the usual manner and looking about him for admiration. But as far as his jests were concerned, he scarcely ever raised a laugh. Even rough diggers look down on a scaly-nosed man, and seldom laugh except *at* him.

"And, here," whispered Masham, "is an

exponent of the 'joys of Bacchus!' 'Wine, perpetual wine!' as that old débauché Anacreon sings. Ah! well; it is a good servant, but a devil of a master."

"Yes; poor Short ought to know that," Chartres remarked. "It is easy now for a man to see what drove him to speak—as Wilkins related—about his unfortunate wife in the manner he has done. Poor Annie! I wonder what she is doing now?"

There were a good many men whom Chartres knew, sitting in the room next the billiard-room. John Wilkins was there smoking his Saturday evening's cigar, and ready to hold forth on any occasion, especially a political one. A change of government was expected; and John was now looking about him for votes, for he intended entering Parliament. As to vote-getting, he would assuredly on this rush succeed well; for he was the most popular man in the district; and it was not possible that he could have enjoyed more friendly respect than he did had he been the Governor himself. In fact no Governor, if he had not the "gift of the gab," as diggers term it, could have been

thought so much of as John Wilkins was. Miners, indeed, and sturdy Australian farmers rather look down on respectable non-political men as beings who wear tall hats, and affect gloves made of kid-skin. They don't think anything of the man who can't or won't meddle in public affairs. As to what side he takes, that does not so very much matter. They can honour even an enemy, if he be loquacious. If he "spouts" well, he is an idol to be set up, bowed down to, and treated to "nobbles" and votes.

By-and-by a cheer announced that the important game of billiards was over. The doctor had received fifteen points, and yet been vanquished. True; the stakes had not been large—only two pounds; but even small as they were they had been made *sub rosa*; for the landlord discountenanced public betting.

"That's four pounds odd I've won to-night, old boy!" Short said, proudly to Chartres. "It's a d—d deal better and pleasanter work than teaching brats, and having to lead the stuck-up life of a confounded 'ranter.'"

"I don't know that you were ever parti-

cularly forced to live like a preacher, Short," Masham said. "You always seemed to me to take life freely and easily; and people said nothing against you either."

"Not a bit of it," Short returned angrily. "It is because I couldn't and wouldn't snuffle and preach that people swore I was an ungodly man, and wouldn't support me."

Short never seemed able to see—even privately—that his drinking was the sole cause of his ruin.

"However," he added, "now I have begun playing, I'll stick to it like a brick, and see if I can't—like Roberts and Higgins—make a comfortable living by the table."

"That sort of thing is not, I should fancy, so very pleasant for a fellow's home," Masham said. To hear Ned, one would think that he was the family man rather than Chartres.

Short by this time was "pretty well on," and as usual he never for a moment could restrain his tongue when in this condition.

"Home?" he said aloud. And then his voice sank to a mysterious whisper. "Look here, Masham. The best home for a man in this country is his hat. Don't you ever get

married if you value your happiness. You'll repent it only once, old boy, and that is —"

"— All the days of my life," sneered Masham.

"Dixisti!" Short said solemnly.

Chartres here interrupted. "It is a foolish thing for a man to speak in such a place as this about his affairs," he said.

"Right you are, philosopher!" Short returned quickly, with a drunken side-look which vexed Chartres much. "But yet, what all the world talks about, a man can't help knowing."

"Curse the fool!" Chartres inwardly ejaculated, "he is going on now at the old work, sneering at his unfortunate wife." And he prudently endeavoured to change the conversation, and started with the commonplace topic of the scarcity of cash just then. But Short in this very subject found an excellent opening for what he had to say.

"Yes; it is infernally scarce just now, and I daresay I feel it as well as anybody. Not that I want to get sixty pounds from any man, or his wife either," the intoxicated man said laughing. "Look here!"


This remark made it evident to Chartres that Short was not only jealous of his wife's friendship towards his—Chartres'—family, but that he believed Annie to have been the person who lent the sixty pounds to meet the bill. However intensely annoyed William felt at the sneer, it left him nothing to catch hold of; and even if it had, he doubtless would not have at this moment spoken his mind.

"Look here!" Short cried; and he ostentatiously takes a handful of silver out of his coat pocket, and then produces a roll of one pound notes.

"These are all fivers and tenners," he said, with as much lying and boasting as if he was a shepherd "out on the drink." "Yes; and I know how always to get more where these came from!"

"For heaven's sake, Short, put up that money, or else give it to the landlord to take care of!" Masham said.

"Do you mean to insult me? You talk as if I was a child, or drunk," was Short's reply to the advice. And then he turned to his late opponent.



“Now Doctor Don Diego, or whatever cognomen thine is, I’ll play you another game and give you thirty points in a hundred as soon as the table is ready for us.”

Now Corway was every whit as great a drunkard as Short was. He was a square-shouldered stout man though, and still athletic, and a good trencherman. Even a hard drinker may remain strong, if his digestion remains good ; and toper as the doctor was, his cheeks and nose were neither very scarlet nor scaly. Consequently he looked down upon Short as a “done up” man. The Doctor was for all the world like a professional pugilist. He had the large knuckles, bullet head, and even the broken down nose of one.

To-night he was terribly wrath at being dethroned from the kingship of the cue ; and the vicious glances he had been giving towards his victorious rival might have intimidated a more careful man than Short. He was now sitting in a corner with some of his public-house companions, endeavouring to explain away his defeat, and exclaiming what he would do next time he played.

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Short had to call out the second time before he attracted his opponent's attention.

"Where is the Doctor?" he bawled. "Has he run away for fear I should be kind enough to give him thirty points in a hundred, and beat him all to rags again?"

The Doctor heard this, and grunted in his corner.


"Now then, Doctor, he's calling you," one crony said.

"By G—! I wouldn't let him or any man crow over me ; darn me, if I would !" another crony cried. "Go and play him, Doctor, and stop his bragging tongue."

And the Doctor thoroughly irate stood up.

"If," he cried, endeavouring to look very dignified, and as cool as contempt could make him, "if Mr. Short or Long, or whatever your name may be, you imagine that your winning that last game was anything more than a lucky chance, I fancy you'll not be long before you find you are mistaken."

"Not a bit of it, Doctor Cormorant or Cordwainer, or whatever *your* name is. I tell you again, that I'll give you as many as thirty points, and still beat you easily."



There was a slight hush here ; more, however from the manner of the two opponents than from their words, for diggers do not attach any indignity to nicknames.

"To the devil with you and your thirty points!" cried the irate Doctor. "When I play, I like to do so with a gentleman, or at least with an honest man."

"That is when you can persuade one of the latter to play with you. Isn't that it, eh, Doctor?"

Corway scorned to notice these words. "By George!" he cried, looking round and addressing the company, "fellows come up from Melbourne with all their tricks about them, and the man who has anything to do with them, is pretty sure to be *bested*!"

"Hear, hear, Doctor!" a voice cried.

"Go it, Doctor," another voice shouted. "Go it, for the honour of the township."

Now Short was as pugnacious as he was hot-tempered ; and he could not stand the Doctor's allusions patiently. As the pair were bandying words, he was holding a cue in one hand and the usual bit of chalk in the other.

"Come along, Short, remember you have money in your pocket," Masham whispered.

But Short's reply to this was, "Go to the devil!" And he called out to the company, "That so-called Doctor there is only trying to pick a quarrel with me, so as to sneak off my playing him."

"You're a d— liar!" roared Corway, who thereupon flopped into his seat; and as he was snorting there after his indignant use of his organs of speech, the bit of chalk well aimed from Short's hand hit him fairly on his broken nose.

Up he started, and seizing a cue from the table, made a tremendous blow at Short. But the long stick caught against the chandelier in which were several kerosene lamps; and down came two of them with a loud crash. Of course they broke, and the oil ran along the billiard-table in a sheet of flame.

And then ensued an uproar! The landlord ran into the room, and most of his customers ran out. Wilkins and his friends rushed in too; and here John showed himself a leader.

"Stop!" he roared to somebody who was about to dash water on the flaming oil, and thereby of course by splashing it over the calico wall-lining, set the house on fire. "Stop!" he cried. Then turning to the landlord, who was looking on in despairing silence, he asked, "Williams, is the table a slate one?"

"Yes," returned the landlord. And Wilkins laid his plans in a moment.

"Earth!" he shouted. "Go, every man of you, and get sand and clay outside, and don't stand there staring."

And he was instantly obeyed.

"Bring a shovel." And some one rushed away and soon returned with one.

Then Wilkins took the earth as it was brought into him, and with his shovel placed it carefully round the table on its slate surface, thus enclosing the oil which was fiercely flaming, and making it perfectly harmless. As much of it which had not been absorbed by the green cloth, and had run out by the pocket-holes on to the floor was at once extinguished by a few buckets full of sand. Thus in less than one minute Wilkins saved

the wooden building from apparently inevitable ruin.

"Now," he cried, "let it burn away as much as it likes ; it can't hurt the slate." And he stood looking on at the flames with great apparent satisfaction, for he saw he had made a hit, and that people knew it too. But he was yet to do better still.

"Woh ! let us pass," roared a huge fellow rushing into the room with two buckets of water. "Clear the road there." And just as he raised one of the buckets to dash the water on the table, Wilkins threw his arm forward, and down fell both bucket and contents on the floor. At the same instant he kicked over the second vessel. All this was the work of two seconds, not longer. There had been no time to speak to the eager water-carrier, who was good-naturedly going to set the house on fire, and actions had to take the place of words. It is doubtful whether there was another man in the district who could have acted so well and decisively as Wilkins did ; and the crowd in the room gave him a cheer even in the midst of their laughter at the comical look of the surprised water-carrier.

"That's the man for my money!" cried one admiring voter.


"He's a born leader!" shouted another. And really Chartres and Masham could not but acquiesce in this last assertion.

Short and the Doctor had vanished in the turmoil; and now as the cry of "fire!" got about, an immense crowd came rushing from all points of the compass.

Here was an opportunity for the expectant M.P.! So he at once went out on the verandah, mounted an empty cask which was soon brought to him, and in a "neat and appropriate" speech, calmed the agitation of his hearers; told them that the fire was now out—for the oil hadn't lasted more than five minutes; and after a little wandering into political subjects, finally recommended them to stand by the injured landlord, and assist him to make good his losses, by each man's coming in and getting a glass, thus consoling two agitated persons at the same time, namely the seller and the buyer. Everybody laughed and followed such acceptable advice; and the hotel-bar was soon crowded by those eager to discuss the fire, and especially the affray which led to it.

A rumour had soon got abroad that the Doctor and "Short-and-Sweet," the billiard-player from Melbourne, had set fire to the Dublin Castle Hotel. An hour or two after the fire was extinguished, there were still several large groups standing in front of the place ; and Chartres, Wilkins and Masham were in the verandah also, chatting about sundry matters.

Chartres noticed a female pushing her way up to the place where they stood. But she stopped as if undecided, when she came near the verandah, and then turned and moved away. She did not go far, however, before she stopped again ; and then after standing still a moment, she came up to Chartres and his friends. She was evidently timid and undecided ; and, moreover, looked so odd in that street of a diggings township, with a bonnet and fall on, as a man on shipboard would appear wearing a chimney-pot hat. Everybody seemed to notice her, at all events, and Chartres could see that she attracted universal attention. Few women of a superior class are ever seen on gold-fields. There are plenty of expensively-attired females, to be



sure ; but one whom men instinctively know to be a lady, is a complete *rara avis*.

The woman came up to Chartres. A woman with a veil, and it down too !

"Mr. Chartres," she faltered. And Annie Short put out her hand timidly, and raised her fall.

I wonder whether John Wilkins had acquired sufficient gentlemanly instincts to have raised his hat to a broken-down man's wife on the diggings ; but I think he had. At all events, Masham set him the example while Chartres was greeting her, and then the other men shook her hand. She breathed hurriedly, as if after quick walking, or through agitation.

"Is Philip here ? Oh, I am so glad I have met you. I heard he had something to do with the fire, and I thought—oh, I was so frightened !"

Chartres at once gave her his arm, and led her away from the crowd. "My dear Mrs. Short," he said, "there is nothing whatever to be alarmed about." Then he explained how the fire had accidentally originated, while the doctor and her husband were using

the billiard-table. "Short left the hotel an hour or two since," he added.

"Philip has some money which papa sent us from Sydney. He *would* take it; and I am so fearful that he will lose it." Annie explained anxiously.

"Then I will go and look for him this instant, and let him know that you want him home," Chartres said.

"No," Annie hastily said. "For goodness sake don't do that."


"Do what?" asked Chartres, thinking they misunderstood one another.

"Don't say that I have—that you have seen—" and she checked herself. Then she sighed deeply, as if she were on the point of weeping.

Chartres was silent.

"But why should I try to keep it secret?" she said, in a desponding tone of voice, "least of all from you? Everybody knows but too well how poor Philip is going on. You must have observed it to-night."

"Poor fellow!" Chartres said, sympathising. "I have indeed observed. But it won't go on this way for ever, you know. He will



change ; and then you must take him to another colony where he is not known. He will do well anywhere."

"Never ! He will never again become as he was, Mr. Chartres," and the poor thing instinctively let down her veil to hide her tears. "God truly knows how I tried to advise him for his good, before we lost all."

"But if he can be persuaded to take the pledge, even for a short time, until the desire for drinking dies away," Chartres suggested.

"That hope is gone, Mr. Chartres. He has taken the pledge already twice, and broken—and turned to drink again." It was too hard to say "broken his oath."

Chartres might well feel shocked. When a man finds an oath no bond, truly some all-powerful fiend must be ever present to give him absolution !

"We have lost everything now you know—the college, and it too bringing in upwards of a thousand a year, for poor Philip was so popular, and his character—"

"Poor fellow !"

"But even this could be borne, if—it Philip were not such a fearfully altered man,

and towards his own family too," Annie faltered. "We are all so different now at home, you know—so unhappy."

Chartres understood the allusion well enough; and he pitied the poor wife from his soul. He could see how much she stood in need of a comforting and consoling voice; and still he felt that he was not in a position to offer her his support. He dared not do so.

"Papa wants me to go and live with him," Annie told him; "but how could I leave poor Philip as he now is? And when I refused papa's last offer to go to him, he sent me that money which Philip has now, and he said he would have no more to do with us, except to send us ten pounds every three months, until poor Philip reformed."

People, when they hear a dismal account of misfortune, must perforce offer some consolatory remarks, though they know well enough that they cannot have much effect. This is what Chartres now did; but he dared not touch on Annie's greatest trouble, which was her unfortunate husband's conduct towards herself. He could only speak of Short's habit of drinking, and offer some



very poor platitudes upon it, and upon the possibility of its soon becoming a thing of the past.

"You are doing well, Mr. Chartres, I hear ; and I am truly glad of it," Annie said.

"Making a living, thank heaven." Chartres answered. He thought she had alluded to his school-keeping ; but she had not. Before she and her husband left Melbourne, they had heard of the great success which Chartres had met with in finding his magnificent claim. They had now been on the diggings about a fortnight, and had learned nothing new concerning Chartres. Annie in her present condition did not like to visit Lucy ; and she thought now, as she had believed some time since, that the Chartres' were successful and even wealthy people. Consequently she now spoke to Chartres as if he still were the owner of the golden claim.

"And how are dear Lucy and the children?" she asked.

"Thank God, they are quite well. Lucy will be so glad to learn you are here. Won't you come and see us often ? It will be so pleasant for her to have an old friend to talk to."

“‘Friend,’ Mr. Chartres,” sighed the miserable girl. “Ah, she has friends enough in her own family! How truly grateful to Providence she must be!”

“So she is, so she is,” he said; “but still I can see she finds the want of female society very much.”


“Don’t you remember, Mr. Chartres, how often you have told me that we make artificial wants when we have no real ones? Perhaps that is her case. O, what are mere pecuniary trials in this country, if we have dear friends to rely upon? Surely if we possess these, we ought not to despair so long as we have enough food, no matter how coarse!”

Chartres here could well have expatiated on his own troubles; but he refrained. This was no occasion on which to talk of his sorrows.

They walked on a minute or two in silence.

“You have a small house of your own, Mrs. Short?” Chartres inquired.

Annie shook her head. “We have but a calico mansion, and that not a very stately one. It has only one apartment about fifteen



feet long." And she laughed—a poor laugh though.

Chartres was much concerned. What a descent !

"But of all the money Short must lately have made, didn't he —?"

"— Save some? No; not a penny. Indeed to tell the truth we are still deeply in debt. And you know that we sold off my little property in Sydney in order to furnish the college for our boarders, and for other expenses."

"If Short could be persuaded to try and leave off drinking, even in the daytime, he might soon reform altogether; at all events he could earn his bread in some way."

"All, all is utterly useless, Mr. Chartres," Annie said vehemently. "It would take hours even to relate all I have said and done for poor Philip's sake. I am afraid he will never alter."

"If you believe that, then you should go to your father."

"Thank goodness the children are with him! But I will stay with Philip. Come what may I will not leave him. And yet,

Mr. Chartres, I would give much to have the children near me. You would hardly believe," she said passionately, and as if she could now see them, "how my heart aches to be with them, to hear their dear voices—to press them in my arms!"

"It is, indeed, a fortunate thing to be assured that they are in good hands with your father!" Chartres interjected. But Annie spoke on:

"O, if I had any hope! If I could believe that poor Philip might one day become as he was! If even now he would be kinder to me in words, and would respect my name, were it but for the children's sake! for;" and the poor girl spoke so piteously, "you know, of course, how he talks, when—when he is not sober, when he is very bad, indeed." And even in the darkness the unhappy wife blushed painfully. "He is always—always drunk, you know, when he speaks as he does."

"Then," said Chartres, "you should not take it so much to heart; for people don't mind what a man says when he is drunk."

"Ah! Mr. Chartres, but those who re-



peat his words don't always say that they are uttered by a man who does not know or mean what he says!" And here Annie spoke in such a really agonised manner, that Chartres thought it best to tell a "white lie," to feign ignorance of the worst part of Short's drunken ravings.

"But, surely," he said, "Short cannot say anything so very foolish that his mere drunkenness would not excuse it! I have heard nothing concerning what you seem to refer to."

"Ah!" was all poor Annie said. How could she explain!



And in a few minutes more they parted, Annie promising to come and see Lucy.

They never met again.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT turned out that Johnny Crowley's "noble came to ninepence" after all, for he was now as well as ever he had been. He was not fated to be a Cyclops ; and upon my veracity, I could not swear that he was not for a while rather sorry than glad thereat. Johnny had the mingled mind of a lawyer and a gamester, and had he become a one-eyed man, his hopeful law-suit against his apparent mutilator would have brought into vehement exercise his legal instincts ; while his gaming faculties would have been cheerfully exercised in speculating on the enormous damages he would of a certainty be awarded.

Now, however, as he was sound and whole again, he sought out the best legal advice. This didn't comfort him. He had no permanent damages to show ; his assailant's



lawyer had averred that it could be proved the injury was wholly the result of his own unstable footing ; and he, himself, hardly remembered anything at all about the matter. He was lawyer enough, too, to know that nothing must be invented to prove his case ; for he was well aware that a skilful cross-examination would in half-a-dozen queries turn the case wholly against him, did he attempt an imaginary history of the affray.

Now, he had relied much on Mrs. Heal's evidence ; and, consequently, he had made his own lawyer examine her as to what she had heard. The lawyer, like a skilful man as he was, questioned her just as he knew she would be tested in the witness-box. But he hadn't to trouble her many minutes ; for the good woman soon disclosed the important fact, that she was not certain whether Chartres had said, "I will blind you ; you have blinded me," or, "I am blinded." In fact, she could be certain of nothing that happened before she entered the room, except the fact that she had had her ear to the key-hole.

"You see, Crowley, what her evidence is worth," the lawyer remarked, after Mrs.

Heal's retirement. "And it might be worth still less, if they happened to ask her what church she had been married in."

"Deuce take it!" Crowley said, with vexation. "But, never mind, I'll go on with the case, now I have begun it. We shall be safe to carry costs at all events."

"Don't you be too sure of that, old fellow. Don't you know that neither a doctor or lawyer is ever able to judge of his own case."


"Never mind, I'll chance it."

"That is all very well, you see, sometimes. But the question is whether Chartres is worth powder and shot now he has lost that good claim of his."

"I don't care a pin. I'll have revenge on the fellow, at all events."

Now a third party had heard this conversation.

The great majority of the good people of Europe believe that all the gold in Australia is still, and to the end of time will be procured in the old style of "cradling." We may again tell them, as they have many a



time been told already, that now-a-days the great bulk of the precious metal is got by the aid of chemistry, helped by steam. For the working quartz-reefs, which is the matrix of the gold, large companies are formed, and as usual in all these cases, shares and shareholders are sold.


On these new diggings where Chartres lived, some really good quartz-reefs had lately been discovered ; and soon those intelligent individuals, known as the "Ballarat men," succeeded in doing well with the shares of companies connected with them. Now John Crowley, like most Melbourne men of any substance, dabbled in mining with some success, and so did his father. These new discoveries making some noise, old Crowley was anxious to invest some spare cash in them, and determined on taking a trip to see the ground for himself. However, about this time Johnny Crowley was recommended by his medical man to take an up-country trip after his long lay up after his debauch ; and as Johnny's intelligence was reckoned by the father superior even to his own, he, instead of Crowley *père*, went to the Aus-

stralian Alps on the voyage of inspection.

Here then he now was in the very presence of his enemy, strangely enough, I was going to say; but since miners go to dig and reefing, speculators go to look at the ground, if they are knowing at all events, it is not so very strange at all.

Johnny of course put up at the best hotel in the township, and this was the "Dublin Castle," which, by the way, now possessed a new and better billiard-table than the one which had been so nearly consumed on the eventful occasion of the fire.

Chartres every Saturday, which in Australia is a school-holiday, used to go out prospecting with Masham. Annie Short probably knowing this, and desirous of seeing Lucy alone, called on her on the Saturday following the fire. Both women were really rejoiced to see each other; their feelings might be compared to those of a traveller who having followed up a marked tree line in a forest for some days without seeing as much as a human foot-print, comes up of a sudden with an old friend; for they both wanted womanly friendship and sympathy much.



Lucy, as we may suppose, was much shocked at the change in her old friend. Annie, instead of twenty-nine years old which she now was, seemed rather forty-nine or fifty. Of course we do not mean to say that her hair was grey, or that she was so decrepit, or anything of that sort ; but what with her thin body and thinner face, the roughened skin and wrinkles in her forehead, besides those telling lines from mouth to nose, the unhappy girl did really look "like her own mother." All her beauty, or rather her dashing appearance was gone, and hardly a trace remained of her old manner as a leader of others. Every one in his relations with his fellows, is either the leader or the led. Annie had heretofore been always the former, now she was the latter.

"And where is Mr. Chartres?" Annie asked, after a good deal of conversation mostly on the subject of her father's offer to take her home.


Lucy answered that he was out prospecting with Masham.

Now this information gave Annie an idea that Chartres must have worked out his

old rich claim, and that consequently he must be very well off at the present moment. For she knew nothing of Foxey Sam's doings, and Lucy had not cared to distress her with an account of her own misfortunes; in fact, as yet she had not had any opportunity of doing so. The bark building, or at least one end of it, and the large tent were comfortably furnished out of the remains of what stock had been brought up from Melbourne, and indeed the whole place seemed to Annie's eyes a very palace compared with her own poor fifteen foot tent.

Now Annie was at the moment very badly off. Her fears about her husband's losing the money her father had sent, had been realised; every shilling had been stolen from the drunken man. Thus they were left absolutely penniless; and as to credit, who would give Short any? Seeing these things, we can soon understand how Annie soon brought her conversation round to a particular subject.

"Did you never find out who placed that sixty pounds in the bank to Mr. Chartres' credit?"



"We have never been quite sure," Lucy replied.

"But," said Annie, with a quiet smile, "you have often guessed names?"

"Oh yes ; and we guessed yours among others."

"Then you guessed correctly, dear."

But poor Lucy was not by any means rejoiced at this announcement. Her heart sank as she heard it ; and she could hardly find the words to thank Annie for her former kindness.

"And Lucy dear," Annie said in a low voice, while she hesitated, and blushed through shame, "the fact is that since Philip lost that money of papa's, we have been very badly off. Indeed, our 'larder' may be said to be empty." She was about to add that for the past two days she had not taken a bit of meat ; but shame hindered her.

Lucy pitied her sincerely.

"And, my dear," Annie continued, with painful hesitation, "now that you have been so fortunate, and are doing so well, I have been thinking I might ask you for a few pounds, or even the whole of that money.

It would quite set us up again. I'm sure, now Mr. Chartres has made so much by that claim of his, that he will be rejoiced at the opportunity of repaying us the money, especially as we want it so very badly. How pleased he will be !”

Here was a blow for poor Lucy ! Annie could not understand why she panted so much, and became red and white by turns. Her surprise and emotion were so great, that she could not speak for a minute or so.

“ But, Annie, have you not heard of what has happened—how William has been robbed, cheated out of all his gold ?—how we have had even to sell some of our own furniture in order to support us—how poor we are ?”

But Annie knew nothing about this.

Then Lucy told her all the history of the cruel ruin which had come upon her husband, and destroyed his hopes when they were highest.

And the two women wept together over their own and each other's misfortunes bitterly enough—too bitterly for those who are supposed to have left all sorrows behind them in the old country.

Ah! ye people of England, who never look to meet with trouble after you shall have undergone the seeming magical process of emigration, it is well ye should know that even the golden land of Australia, has—especially for head-working and refined men and women—its hard and its bitter trials, just as other lands have.

As I have said—the two women cried together, and showed their distress freely enough. And still they differed much in their sorrow. Annie, by one remark, showed this very plainly.

“Ah, Lucy, what for a time is the want of money, when one has a dear affectionate husband and children to comfort her.” And she spread out her arms and locked her hands together. “Were I but like you, so happy, so thrice blessed in my home, I should almost laugh at pecuniary losses; I could even sneer at them. Nothing should bear me down!”

Lucy made no self-glorifying remark to this, though she was truly grateful to heaven that her husband was not like poor Annie’s. She might well have said though, had she

cared to enter on the painful subject. "Yes, Annie; something could bear you down and wring your heart—seeing your dear husband in misery." She knew but too well how her own heart was wrung by this.

"Annie, dear," she asked, "why do you not accept your papa's kind offer to live with him? I am sure Mr. Short would soon alter, when he was under the influence of his father-in-law."

"God knows I would gladly go, gladly indeed, if——" and she stopped. It was a bitter thing to have to confess that her own father had refused her husband an asylum.

—"If what, Annie dear? If Mr. Short would go with you?"

Annie shook her head. "He would go, dear. I think I could persuade him to do that. But papa will not have him. He declares he will not even see him until he reforms."

"Oh, Annie! Would he not invite him to his home so as to give him an opportunity of forsaking his old companions, and becoming steady again?" Lucy asked this feelingly.

"No; I have written home many times

about this. But it is all to no use," she said with a sigh, "and I cannot leave poor Philip." And the faithful woman said this last firmly.

"No, dear ; you cannot indeed," was the supporting assurance. Lucy knew that she herself would do likewise ; and she loved her friend the more for her loyalty to her unfortunate husband.

"Yes ; while we have a shilling to live upon I will remain with poor Philip, and when we haven't that," the poor girl plaintively whimpered, "when we have no more money, then, he and I can lie down together and die."

One who only knew Annie in her prosperous days, would never have believed she could talk thus. But where a woman feels an interest there she can love ; and now in these wretched days of her husband's life Annie pitied him, and seemed to love him through that pity. Truly women are inscrutable beings to selfish men.

"We have hardly a penny now indeed," poor Annie sobbed. And then, drying her eyes and trying to smile, she said, "Rather

different this to when we first met each other, Lucy !”

How rejoiced Lucy would have been had her husband been in a position to repay that sixty pounds that day.

“ You know now how poor we also are, Annie,” she said, “ would to heaven William were able to repay you that money. But I have some, at all events, in the house,” —it was being saved up to pay the butcher’s bill—“ and you must accept this, dear, at least as a small instalment until better days come.” And Lucy gave her three one-pound notes.

Annie joyfully received them. “ I am so glad, Lucy,” she said, “ for poor Philip’s sake. It will keep him from going about asking credit for our food, and being insulted by refusals,” she said apologetically. “ But are you quite sure you can spare this, my dear ?”

Lucy had to say what was far from being the fact. “ Certainly I can spare it, Annie. Would to heaven it were more. And, Annie dear, pray don’t grieve so much. You really look so careworn. Philip will soon get steady again I’m sure. And, then too, you always

have your papa to look to. How much better are your prospects than ours! We have not a single relative to whom we could apply if we were dying of want."

"My prospects better than yours, Lucy? Ah, how can you say so? If Philip were only like your dear husband, like—." And a sigh ended the sentence.

"Like my husband," thought Lucy proudly, "but there is no one like *my* husband!"

And the two friends who had known each other under such different circumstances, parted.

CHAPTER XV.

"TELL Ned, Lucy dear, that I shall be at the last hole we sank; and ask him to bring the tools." Such were William Chartres' words on leaving home early on the Saturday morning, the week after Annie had called. He kissed Lucy and the children as he usually did on leaving them.

It was easy for his affectionate wife to see that he was this morning even more depressed than usual. As the day of trial of Crowley's action drew near, he had become more and more troubled; but this morning he was very sad indeed.

Lucy went about her Saturday's work when her husband was gone. She thought over her troubles, and she thought of him, and prayed to God that he might be fortunate.

Ah, me! how grateful we ought to be that the future is hidden from us.

Ned Masham, who had been away to the township, came home a few hours after Chartres left; and according to directions, followed his friend with the digging tools. He did not find him at the appointed place; however he worked away by himself at the new prospecting shaft, setting up a windlass, and expecting that Chartres might have been taken away by an acquaintance, he gave himself no trouble about the matter. Five o'clock came, and then he turned his face homewards; he had about three miles to walk, and got in by six o'clock—tea time.

“Where is William?” Lucy inquired.

“That is just what I was about to ask you?” replied Ned.

Then, after mutual explanations and surmises, Masham adjourned to his mia-mia to have his usual evening bath.

Half-past six came, but no William; and at seven o'clock, the hungry children, being clamorous for their tea, they all sat down without the head of the little house. This was the first time he had been absent from

the pleasant evening meal since he had been on the diggings, and Lucy noticed it.

"He has met some friend, and has gone to spend the evening with him," Masham suggested.


"But he would have sent us word."

"Pooh! not he," Ned declared. "We need not look for him now; for he won't perhaps come home until ten or twelve o'clock."

But ten, eleven, twelve o'clock came, and yet no William.

Lucy began to be very anxious, and Masham saw it; so after tea he went into the township to the hotels where Chartres might be, and also to several of his acquaintances; but he could gather no tidings of William, and now he, too, became anxious.

"The fact is I fancy," Ned said, with a smile, to pretend to Lucy that it was rather a funny adventure than otherwise, "that he has missed his way back, and if he has, he will then find the extreme pleasure of camping out until daylight comes, when he can see the Mount, and then we shall have him come ravenously home to breakfast."



"Lost! Mr. Masham—lost in the bush!" Lucy cried in terror, "and he may, perhaps——"

"Nonsense!" said Masham, with a great show of nonchalance. "He couldn't be lost, even if he were only a new chum, much less such a capital bushman as he is by this time. How could a man possibly be lost with the Mount in sight of him?"

"What if he has been taken ill, and no one near him?"

Ned could only repeat "Nonsense!" to this, and try to persuade Lucy to go to bed. He would sit up and watch.

But Lucy would not lie down, nor even sit for long at a time. The whole of that night she walked up and down, wringing her hands and praying for her dear husband; and so the morning and noon came, and her agony increased.

Oh! that terrible phrase, "Lost in the bush!" It is an ever présent dread to those who have to enter those mighty land-oceans, the forests. "Lost in the bush!" In winter to die slowly of cold fatigue and madness. In the more cruel summer to perish

in three or four days in the agonies of thirst!

Noon, this hot Sunday. It had soon become known that Mr. Chartres—the man whose good claim had been “jumped”—was lost in the bush. It was discussed everywhere; the diggers in their lodging-houses spoke of it; every tent contained talkers about the matter. In the shanties and hotels it was discussed loudly. Men, as they passed each other out of doors, eagerly asked about it. Some shook their heads, and said it must soon be all over with him this hot weather, if he didn't chance upon water; while the public-house braggers pooh-poohed his folly for allowing himself to be lost at all, and gave lengthy and embellished accounts of the pathless districts they had often crossed with only the sun and “the look of the land” for their guide. Some winked and nodded sagely, and whispered that Mr. Chartres had got lost “accidentally on purpose,” because he knew very well he would soon have to pay up heavy damages in that lawsuit against him for blinding a man. But this last view of the case was soon abandoned when it was known what suffer-

ings his wife, and what anxiety his friends were undergoing.

As to Ned Masham, he left no stone unturned. John Wilkins, too, eager to push himself forward in any public matter helped him well. They went to the police camp and had troopers sent out. They telegraphed to the various stations on the line, and to Melbourne, in order that the people in the mountain districts should be set on the alert.

This morning the tale was told from the pulpits of all the weatherboard places of worship on the diggings. The evening came; and Sunday as it was, John Wilkins still kept at work. He sent bellmen, two, three, four of them round the township calling a meeting for that evening at nine o'clock, in front of his store. It was seven o'clock when he did this; and in two hours five hundred sturdy diggers were assembled round his house. Then John Wilkins stood up and spoke, he spoke well too, and to the purpose. Indeed since he became a man, that is since he became a colonist, he seemed to do everything well. Ned Masham, who was oddly enough a staunch democrat, often called him one of

Gray's Cromwells, or Miltons who didn't rest "mute and inglorious" because he didn't remain in England.


John gave the crowd a history of how his friend was missed. He told them what steps had already been taken by himself and Masham; and then he invited those present who knew the back country to stand forth and offer their advice and opinions.

"Does he know much about the bush, Mr. Wilkins?" asked a tall fair-haired small-headed Sydney native.

Masham answered: "He has not lived much up country, mates; but for all that he has a good idea of locality—where a place is, you know. He is an educated man too, and can travel by the sun and stars, and what is better, I don't think there is a river in the colony that he does not know the lie of."

"He is not a man likely to lose his head directly he knows he's lost, and travel in a circle like most on 'em, and never go ten miles straight on in any direction, is he?"

"He is not; and as far as I can judge he will make for the Mitchell River, and strike it too if his strength holds out."



"Aye, that's it, Mister. But there won't be much strength left in him, if he goes twenty-four hours without a drink, this weather."

"I don't know that he'll have to do that, mate," cried another man. "If he's a knowledgeable fellow at all, and one who knows the looks of a country, he'll be likely to make for some of the lagoons and streams that's like to be found at the foot of the ranges that run east and west. I travelled across them nigh twenty-two years ago, into New South Wales; and we always came upon more water-holes than we wanted. It was in a dry season, too."

"Yes," returned the first speaker, "but you forget that since them days, the ranges is as full of wild cattle as they can well hold; and I'm blest if they leave much water in the holes now-a-days when there's anything of a drought, much less such a one as we've had all this year." He turned to Wilkins here; "Howsumever I think, Mr. Wilkins, as he'll be most likely to go east, when he finds the ranges is such bad travelling as they are. He'll do that if he is anything of a bushman

at all, because he'll know that the water-courses must set southward from the rising ground."


"Then the first river he'll strike will be the Mitchell;" somebody else said, "and if he follows it down, he'll soon be safe enough on a station."

"But," Masham suggested, "he may have come already upon a water-hole, and no doubt he'll stay by it as long as he can."

"Then," cried a stalwart stockman from the crowd, "we're safe to find him alive or dead; for I know every permanent lagoon (and there's but three on 'em) between here and the Macalister."

The discussion continued. It was urged that the missing man might not be far away after all. He might have met with some injury, or have been taken ill, and perhaps be lying but a few miles away.

"Or else," suggested a digger, "he may be like a friend of mine that was found alive three days after he was lost. He missed the track at night-fall, so he camped out waiting for day-break, and lit a fire at the foot of a dry tree. In the middle of the night



the tree was burnt through, and fell on his legs, and broke them both ; and there he lay pinned to the ground, not able to move an inch, while the fire came creeping along the tree towards him, just as happens every year to new chums that will camp near dry trees, and make fires against them. When we found him, the fire had come up close to him, and the legs of his moleskins were scorched and burned off him ; and he never got the use of one leg again, though the bones set right enough. Mayhap Mr. Wilkins' friend may be in such a plight as this, if he hasn't been killed outright."

And now, John Wilkins nobly spoke up for his lost friend. He appealed to the feelings of the rough and hardy men present ; he spoke of their wives, and mothers and children. He told of the missing man's family, of their grief and despair, of their perhaps soon wanting bread. He pictured the man lying ill and perishing, or wandering about in all the agonies of thirst, who might yet be saved by a little timely aid. He dilated on the reward which every honest being would find within his own bosom, for helping

to restore a lost man to the world again, and to those who loved him.

"I'll give the man, who first finds him alive twenty pounds, mate," he cried, "and I'll give five pounds to the first who finds his remains if, poor fellow, he is dead!"

"Hear him, hear him!" cried the crowd.

"But it is not the money, Mr. Wilkins," a dozen voices in as many different words said, "Reward or no reward, we will all do our very best."

And by-and-by the details of the search were agreed upon.

In the morning four hundred men were to go out in bands of twenty a-piece. As many as had horses were to be mounted. Every man, too, who possessed a gun or pistol was to carry one, with its ammunition. Each party of twenty was to be led either by men who knew the district, or else by experienced bushmen; and all were to carry a bottle of water, a little brandy, some boiled milk, or a few eggs, and a box of matches. We knew what the food and the water and brandy were for. The guns were for signals—each man to fire an occasional shot—both

to the lost man and to any of the search party who might miss his way. At sunrise all were to meet at an appointed place, when their various beats would be pointed out to them.

It was truly unfortunate that not a black tracker was to be found on the diggings, but Wilkins had already sent mounted messengers to the stations where these natives are to be found, and to those police camps where they are officially employed, and next day one or more would be sure to arrive in the township.

Thus, every emergency seemed provided for.

CHAPTER XVI.

NED MASHAM went with a heavy heart to Lucy's house that night at twelve o'clock, and there he found her. The children were clinging round her as she sat in her grief by the open door, teaching them to pray for their dear lost father, and in the midst of their words, telling them how she loved her husband, and how he had loved them and her.

"Poor thing!" thought Ned. "No matter what trouble came while William was with her, she still seemed able to bear up against it, and to encourage him; while now he is gone, she is quite unnerved — quite distraught!"

Ned thought thus, as he saw the children out of their beds at that late hour. Formerly they used to have their sponge-baths, and be put to sleep every evening at eight, as regu-

larly as the sun himself sunk below the horizon ; but to-night, Ned helped to undress them, and get them out of the way, while he talked to their poor afflicted mother, and tried, good fellow, to inspire her with that hope with which he now hardly dared to comfort himself.

After the children were in bed, Lucy was soon at her restless walk to-and-fro again. Ned told her all about the meeting, and what was to be done in the morning, and tried to give her some confidence. But this seemed almost impossible to be done. Ever since sundown this evening, she appeared to have lost all hope of seeing her beloved husband alive again.

Annie Short had been with her this morning ; and since she had left, Lucy was more hopeless. Why was this ? Because, in the course of conversation, Annie had said she hoped Lucy had not told her husband that the sixty pounds had been asked for. But Lucy recollected only too well, that she had told William all about the matter—who had lent the money, and that the lender was in sore need of it. Remembering this now,

Lucy walked her dreary, monotonous round, to-and-fro, her hands clasped together, and exclaiming, "Ah, my darling! ah, Mr. Masham! I know he has destroyed himself through my folly! That dreadful law suit was bad enough; but ever since I told him how Annie was so badly off, and had asked for a few pounds of that money, he seemed to become more miserable. God forgive me!"

"My dear Mrs. Chartres," Ned began.

"Ah! yes; it was my fault—all my fault! Why did I worry him, and drive his poor sensitive brain to destruction, by telling him of the distress of others? He has destroyed himself!"

Masham stood up and laid his hand gently on her arm.

"For heaven's sake, Mrs. Chartres! for William's sake, don't talk in this way. Do you not know what dreadful harm it may do? Don't you know that you are accusing your dear husband of a crime—of committing——"

"What harm—what harm, Mr. Masham, can the truth do? O God, forgive me for what I have done!"

"Hush! For God's sake—for his, for your children's sake! Don't you know that all poor William's efforts for years past to find the money to pay his insurance-premiums will go for nothing, if you make people believe he has killed himself? Don't you know that all his struggles and pinchings to pay those charges in his policy will be useless, if he has committed suicide?"

"Ah, Mr. Masham!"

"Yes, indeed. And now for the sake of his good name—and I tell you I believe him to be as truly alive this night as I myself am—don't let me ever hear you talk so wildly again. Try and keep up, and be patient as you always have been in your troubles before now."


"I will—I will, Mr. Masham. Indeed, I'll try," the agonized girl said, and she shivered as she spoke, with suppressed emotion, and pressed her hands together hard over her heart, as if she could thus subdue its wild throbbings.

"How is it you have become so unnerved about this trouble? Fie, fie! You, too, who have always been so patient and hopeful

under your difficulties before now—in William's presence!" Ned forced himself to say this in a reproachful tone.

"Yes, there it is—there it is, Mr. Masham!" she said, wildly. "While I had his dear face before me—had him alive and loving me and our children; while he was spared to us I could bear anything, any trouble under heaven. But now, O God! O merciful God!" she cried, despairingly, and casting herself down on her knees, and folding her hands over her face, she prayed aloud, "Spare him to me! O heavenly Father, in Thy great mercy, grant him but life, and I ask of Thee nothing else."

It was very painful for Masham, good, kind-hearted fellow, to see all this and not to be able to give her the assurance she wanted—that William still lived. He tried though, tried very hard; and in a little while he partially succeeded. One thing he was particular to accomplish, and that was to make her promise faithfully that she would never again make any remark concerning her fears that William had intentionally destroyed himself; though the fact is, that after hearing




all Lucy had said on the subject, Masham himself was partly inclined to think that Chartres actually might have committed suicide in a moment of temporary madness, occasioned by his recent troubles. He himself had noticed how much Chartres had become depressed since the time of Annie's first visit ; and then William's knowledge that in the event of his death his family would inherit the eight hundred pounds for which his life was insured, and so be placed in a position to get a good start in life, made Ned all the more afraid that Lucy's fears might be verified.

Indeed Chartres had many a time said as if in jest, that it would be a fortunate thing for all connected with him, if such an unlucky fellow as himself were out of their way ; that through his death his wife would be enabled to purchase and furnish a house suitable for a boarding-school, which would be sure to pay her well. Was it any wonder that Lucy remembered such cruel jests as these, now her husband had disappeared ? Was it any wonder that they were driving her to distraction ?

Monday morning's sun rose, and the four

hundred men turned out on their errand of mercy. It would be useless to try and depict the agony of Lucy's mind all that day ; she now looked so old and haggard that few persons would have readily recognised her. She never rested, how could she? and yet two days and nights had passed since she had slept. It was a blessing she had something to occupy herself with in preparing for her husband's return, either living or dead. She kept her fire alight day and night, had water boiling, cooked nice little delicacies, fowl soups, jellies and the like; laid William's linen ready, and had her little home swept and garnished for the return of her lost husband.

Annie Short and Margaret Wilkins remained with her all that Monday ; and their presence was much comfort to her. Mrs. Wilkins wanted to have the children sent out of the way over to her house ; but Lucy would not consent to part with them even for an hour. Every now and then she would talk and fondle them in a distracted way, and ask them to tell her how much they loved their dear papa.



Noon came, but no tidings. They could hear occasional stray shots far in the bush.

Sundown crept on, and still nothing was learned. Men now began to return from the search, heated and worn out with fatigue; but not one could give any comfort.

"I'm afraid," said one mounted man to Annie, who went out to him, but Lucy heard him speaking, "I'm afraid it's all over with him. The whole of this blessed day I have not come upon so much as a drain of water—the country is so fearfully burnt up with this drought. If he's not found to-night, or to-morrow at the farthest, he can't stand it."

Who shall describe the wife's feelings on hearing these words?

And now it was dark; a dull, heavy, moonless night, and most of the searchers had returned. Dropping shots are still heard as the men slowly came in. Hope was gone for this night!

By-and-by a man came and tapped gently, very gently, at the door, and beckoned Margaret Wilkins, who opened to him, put his finger on his lips, and motioned her out-

side. She could see but one man ; but there was a crowd who had followed him, standing a little way off.

"Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Masham and the people with them won't be in to-night," he whispered.

"Won't come home to-night?"

"No. They have found something ; and they have camped by *it* till daylight comes."

Margaret shuddered.


"The troopers is gone out to them."

"Found something ? Found what ?" Margaret tremblingly asked.

"Well, they're afeared it must be his ashes, Mrs. Wilkins. They're afeared he's been made away with by foul play *and then burnt, as many a poor fellow is by them that murders him.*"

Margaret hearing this had much to do to stand upright.

"And Mr. Wilkins says particularly as how you're not to say one single word of this to *her*," pointing his finger indoors. "But you are to tell her that they have come on his tracks, and that from what they can see they have but little hopes left. They sent



me here for fear *she* might be told this by somebody as knew it, and would tell her all of a sudden. Good night, Mrs. Wilkins." And the man was gone—gone to the crowd near, an audience impatiently awaiting him to hear his terrible story.

Margaret Wilkins, with all her outward frivolity, could not all these years of her marriage help catching some of her husband's common-sense ways. She went indoors and managed to tell her tale to Annie without Lucy's knowledge; in fact she wrote it on a bit of newspaper which happened to be lying on the table, and passed it to her.

"What does he say?" Lucy moaned rather than asked clearly.


"My dear, he only says what we already think—only fears the worst. Do we not all fear that already? He had nothing new to tell us."

Margaret spoke thus coldly on purpose. She knew that something must be done before she dared venture to say the truth.

"Nothing new—nothing new!" Lucy repeated, "Ah! yes. We know all—we know all; too well—too well!"

The unfortunate girl was seated on the child's bed which stood in the further part of the tent. Her youngest boy lay asleep in her arms, and she was rocking herself to-and-fro in a very listless way, as if she had begun this in order to lull the child to sleep, and now had continued the motion mechanically.

Her two companions now set all their energies to work in persuading Lucy to take some rest. She had not lain down since she left her bed on Saturday morning ; and now the want of sleep and her mental agony had begun to unsettle her mind. They knew this by hearing her talk to herself as if she were conversing with William, while she now wandered restlessly to-and-fro, now threw herself on her knees for a moment or so, and again dropped into her chair and covered her face with her trembling hands invoking her husband to return to her and his children. But all efforts to get her to lie down were quite fruitless. She even tried to do so once in obedience to Annie's kind injunctions ; but it was only a trial, for at the instant her exhausted body began to slumber, she started up with a wild scream which appalled



Annie and Margaret. They persuaded her no more.

It was well past midnight when Annie, on the pretence of going home for a little while, went to the doctor and asked what she should do in order to make Lucy sleep. She returned with a white powder of strong narcotic properties, and a bottle of ale which she had procured from Margaret's house. The powder was secretly put into a glass of the ale, and Lucy was persuaded to take it, to "take it as a stimulant, which would enable her to keep awake."

An hour afterwards the unfortunate girl was asleep, and so indeed were her two friends soon after.

The morning came, and the tired women still slept. The sun did not even awaken the children, for they had not been put into their bed until midnight, their distracted mother refusing to part with them until one after the other fell asleep in her arms. Lucy lay on her bed behind the curtain which divided the tent into two, and Margaret and Annie were in their chairs, both in a restless slumber.

"Hush!" whispered Masham, as the two weary women opened their heavy eyes and found a man beside them. "Hush! for heaven's sake, and do not wake her if she is asleep;" and he pointed towards the screened-off apartment where Lucy lay, and asked in dumb show if she was not sleeping.

Annie motioned "yes;" and then he beckoned her and Mrs. Wilkins outside the tent.


"They have brought his ashes in——"

"How did it happen?"

"Heaven alone can tell that," Ned whispered. "But he has been murdered, and the body burnt. There is not a vestige of his clothing remaining, nothing but some ashes, a few half burnt teeth and a dentist's gold plate and artificial tooth; nothing but these to tell the tale."

"Oh, God!"

"Yes," said Masham, "one wonders why He should permit such deeds to be done. But don't you remember the poor pedlar and his brother on the Murrumbidgee two years ago? Nothing found but their teeth and some buckles, and buttons of their clothes;



and their murderers have never been heard of."

"Ah, Lucy — poor Lucy!" and Annie cried bitterly. She knew what the shattering of such a love as Lucy's must be; and her heart bled for her.

Margaret Wilkins shivered as she stood there thinking over the dreadful calamity. She thought, too, of her husband, and clasped her hands together wildly, as it came into her mind to picture her own misery had she lost John. "Ah, poor Mr. Chartres! How awful for Lucy! Ah, my God!" She said this distractedly, and loudly, while Annie remained silently weeping. The two women made a contrast, and the seeing it, affected Masham in a peculiar way.

"Ah, my God!" he repeated, in a fretful tone of irritation and grief. "What is the use of talking that way? Ejaculations can give us no assistance. The thing now is, how are we to break the awful intelligence to her? How is she to be enabled to live at all, when she learns the horrors of his death?"

"Heaven have pity on her!" Margaret interrupted.

“Don’t for mercy’s sake go saying such things before her! ‘O, my God’—and—and—and——”

“Pray, Mr. Masham, pray don’t scold me. I feel so ill—I really do!” implored poor Margaret, who was now alive to what Masham said. And Ned seeing her real distress, felt heartily sorry for his words.

“Forgive me, pray do, Mrs. Wilkins,” he said, appealingly. “I am very sorry for having spoken so hastily. But God knows how truly afflicted I am. Chartres was my own dear friend in this world. I think a man can grieve for a friend’s loss, as much as a woman for a husband’s,” he faltered. “And yet not that——” and he stopped, for his voice failed him a moment. “Do you know,” he asked, in broken sentences, “that for the last two months he has been supporting me—giving me money out of his own hard earnings? Can I forget how he and she saved me from death, and tended me as if I had been one of their own children?” And he clenched his hands, and stamped upon the ground, showing what hard and sorrowful battle he was doing with his rising sobs.

"God truly knows how bitterly I——" But he could say no more. He moved a few yards off, and turned his face away.

"I must go back to the police camp now," he said, after a minute's silence. He spoke from where he stood—a few yards from his hearers—so that they should not see his face. "*It* is there by this, I daresay, for the troopers have had time to return by now."

"Will you not come back and help us, Mr. Masham?"

"I dare not. I leave it to you to break it to her—God help her!"

Happy for Lucy that the narcotic they had given her had taken such powerful effect. She did not awake until after noon on that dreadful day. The two children, when they arose in the morning, had been quietly removed to Wilkins'; and when their mother awoke, the place was silent. The effects of the drug were still strongly upon her, so strongly indeed, that even after her sudden leap off the bed, she had no power to open her eyes, and every now and then would fall into a kind of slumberous inactivity, both of body and mind. Truly fortunate for her

that her perceptions were thus dulled. It enabled her to live through tidings, which otherwise might have killed her.

By sundown that evening, she knew she was a widow.

“The children—my children!” she cried, “are they taken from me, too?” And they were obliged to hasten and bring them to her. And she at last fell asleep in the far hours of that monstrous night, tearless and unsobbing, but moaning in the weakness and weariness of her body. She had been drugged again.

After that night, time was of no account to her. Even in the depth of her slumber, the black nimbus of grief overshadowed her; and she slept and woke, and woke and slept, in either state unconscious of hope, unconscious that joy existed in the world, looking neither to the right nor to the left, neither to the past nor to the future, hoping nothing, fearing nothing, dead to all active emotion.

And the days flew by; and her first blessed life-giving tears were shed in the arms of her father.

“It will not do to let her remain here one day longer,” said father to John Wilkins.

"No, Mr. Chartres," John agreed. And John did still more than talk. He lent father twenty pounds on the spot. "You can repay me by-and-by," he said. "It is a loan for a few weeks only; for the amount of the policy will soon be paid. I dare say you are not just now overburdened with ready cash, as I hear you are making experiments on curing meat for the European market; and experiments cost money."

Father said, "Yes. I have been making experiments, and as I believed successful ones too. I thought to do something for my boy—but—"

"All I can say is, 'Go on,' Mr. Chartres. If you succeed in making Australian meat saleable in England—let it be fresh or cured—I can tell you that you must make a fortune. You must. The thing is in the mouths of all commercial men now-a-days, and they have but one opinion on the subject, that there is a splendid fortune to be made in that line, and a speedy one too."

When poor father had ended his saying with a "but," he meant to have gone further. He meant to have said that now his

“boy” was gone from him he had no heart to experimentalise, no heart to endeavour to rise again high in the world. But for all that, John Wilkins’ words encouraged him. Had he not still his son William’s wife, and his children to work for?

Lucy went away from the township at once. She and father lived awhile in Melbourne, and then accepted an invitation from Mr. Drummond, father’s friend, to come and stay on his station.

Masham accepted the situation of general assistant to Wilkins. And thus we leave him for the present.

CHAPTER XVII.


THE inquest was held; and we may give a short account of the evidence which was given thereat. Firstly, the medical men affirmed that the remains were those of a man—a white one. As to the gold plate of the false bicuspid tooth of the left upper jaw, Masham recognised that as Chartres'. This assured people whose remains had been found. And then came the evidence as to who was the murderer. Nobody had any doubt that there had been a foul murder committed, and that the victim's body had been burned designedly, for the evidence of this last was very plain.

The remains had been found amidst the ashes of a large pile of timber and unburnt ends of logs, which had of necessity been placed together by human hands. Had the

unfortunate victim acted as many a new comer does, made his camp fire against a dead standing tree, and had this fallen and pinned him to the ground until he was burned to death, in such a case a large portion of the body would have been found unconsumed. Here, however, everything had been done to conceal a diabolical murder. What was the murderer's motive? Not gain; for Chartres had nothing worth stealing on his person. Revenge? And then people recollected Crowley, and the quarrel, and the lawsuit.

Some men had heard Crowley after his own talkative manner, and in public, declare that "he would be the ruin of Chartres; that he would have his revenge one way or another; that he —" and the dozen other parrot-like threats which a man fond of hearing his own big words, and of assuming airs of power over others, makes against an enemy, and will make till the end of time.

Where was Crowley now? He had left the township on the very day Chartres was missed! And there soon came forth more damning evidence than all. A man, out



prospecting, had actually seen Crowley and Chartres in the bush quarrelling; at all events they were having high words together he averred; and he distinctly saw Chartres take hold of the bridle of Crowley's horse, and retain it apparently against the rider's will. Now this was the last seen of Crowley. It had occurred on a bridle-path through the bush. This track led to a station about forty-five miles away; and from this point there was a marked-tree-line across the Alps to Kiandra a post town on the New South Wales side, from which of course a main road led to Sydney.

But all this latter evidence was not adduced at the inquest. There, there was a verdict returned against some person or persons unknown; and then the government offered a reward of two hundred pounds for the discovery of the murderer. The fruits of this was that the man who had seen Chartres and Crowley in the bush together, came and gave his version of the affair to the police; and thereupon they acted "from information received."

The offered reward had its immediate

effect, and that was, that about ten days after the murdered man's remains had been found, telegrams were dispatched all over Australia ; and in Sydney, the capital of the colony or state of New South Wales, John Crowley was arrested for the wilful murder of William Chartres. He was brought to Melbourne by steamer, committed for trial, and no amount of bail that his father could offer would be so much as heard of.

The trial was to take place about a month after the committal.

Many people blamed poor old Mark Crowley ; some few praised him. But the broken-hearted old man never heeded what was said about him. He always surveyed his own paths, and then trod them regardless of the outer world's opinion. Since John had been arrested as a murderer, he refused to see him.

As far as money could go, the father assisted his unhappy son. Already he had uselessly offered bail for him to the full value of every penny he possessed in the world ; and this he justified himself in doing. He justified himself, too, in employing the best legal

assistance that money could procure for his son ; but yet he would not see him.

“He may be innocent,” was his thought, unexpressed even to Mary his wife. “He may be innocent, though I can’t think it—God help me! I see what I see, and I can’t get over that, if I was to die for it. And yet he may not have done the deed. But he is put on his trial before the country to show whether he is a guilty man or not ; and the law’s against him, the law and the forms, and the police is against him, let him be innocent as the sun.” It is a prevailing idea among the untutored, that the law is necessarily against every man accused of a crime. “If he’s innocent, he’ll want help to show them he is, and he shall have help, too. If my life would show him an innocent lad, I would freely give it—freely.” And thus Crowley reasoned, and aided his son.

No clear description can be given of what his feelings were as to how he should act after the trial, in the event of his best loved son being found guilty, inasmuch as he had no clear idea on the subject himself. The fact is that he dared not look upon this side of

the case. But it is not difficult to guess what he would do. Love in the end will conquer all other feelings.

It was now three weeks after Crowley's arrest; and a week hence he would be tried.

In contradiction to her husband, the poor mother had never missed an opportunity of going to see and comfort her boy. She, from the first, never doubted his innocence; and yet all her persuasions made no effect on her husband. He regarded the evidence against his son, not mere protestations. Truly this poor old man was making himself a martyr to his sense of justice!

One day the mother came home after seeing her unhappy son; and her step was light, and her face many years younger looking than when she left her husband a few hours before.

"Oh, Mark!" the poor woman cried, throwing her arms round his neck, as he sat by the table with his open Bible before him. He never went out into the streets now, never saw a strange face, and his hair was rapidly changing from its natural colour to snow-white. "Oh, Mark! my dear man,

my dear husband ! Our boy, our own darling Johnny is proved innocent to-day—as innocent as a babe before the whole world ! I knew it, Mark, I knew it. Haven't I always told you so—haven't I, haven't I ?”

This was not the first time the poor mother had made some such declaration—protested her son's innocence after hearing from himself an account of his real actions in fresh words. Crowley knew this ; and he could not give that heed to the announcement which the good old woman so eagerly looked for.

He merely said, sadly, “ Our boy ? Ah, our boy no more, Mary, till he's proved himself innocent afore all men.” And then he bent his grey head down towards his Bible again, and gave a weary sigh.

“ Oh, Mark !” said his wife, very bitterly, “ what's been and come over ye, that all your heart's gone from him ye once loved best of all on 'em ? Have ye taken on again him so much, that you seem as if you couldn't believe he's innocent—what's come over ye, Mark ?”

Crowley got up and walked up and down

the room nervously. All his colonial habit of loquacity had now quite deserted him. His innate taciturn, and deeply thoughtful manner was in full ascendent; and he spoke but seldom, and even then in very few words.

“Don’t let me hear ye talk that way, Mary,” he said, sternly. He was galled at the words of imploring protestation which his anxious wife had uttered in her chagrin, at seeing him so cold, while she was so warm. “Don’t ye talk that way, woman, when you know as how my heart’s blood would be but little to give to have him again as he was.”

“But, Mark dear, you won’t go and see him; you won’t go and give him the comfort of speaking to you. He feels that worse than all. He does, he does. And you know how dearly he’s always loved you—how he never thought on others more than you and me—how he never set himself a bit above us for all his cleverness and knowledge. He says to me he would rather die, and you to know he was innocent, than live and you to think him guilty. Won’t you try, Mark

dear—won't you try now, and think of him at the best?" the wife implored.

"I'll try and act for the best, Mary; what more can I do?"

"Yes, Mark; I know that, dear. Don't all the colony know that you offered all you was worth in the world to bail him? Don't they know how you're spending hundreds and hundreds of pounds on the best lawyers and counsellors in the land to save him."

"I'd do more than that, Mary. I'd give my life for him."

"Yes, old man! Ah, yes I know that. But won't you believe him to be as he is—as I know he is—what the good Lord truly knows he is—as innocent as the babe unborn. O, if you would only listen to what I have heard. If you would only try and believe me!"

"What you've heard, Mary? What was you saying when you came in?" And he asked this very eagerly.

"O, Mark, that is it! Now you'll see he's innocent! Young Mr. Sinden as you may remember was Mr. Chartres' friend; young Mr. Sinden this very day has written to say how he met Mr. Chartres in Sydney,

alive and well, and that too on the very same day our boy was arrested. I've heard all this from Mr. Scott (the lawyer,) and it'll take a hundred pounds more expenses to have Mr. Sinden ; but I know you won't begrudge that, Mark dear." The wife said all this as quickly as a roulade on the piano.

"Begrudge that, Mary?" He said. He was always slow of perception, now in his trouble, much more so than usual ; and he suddenly sat down and covered his face with his hands, digesting the words he had just heard.

"Why did you not tell me this before, woman?" he suddenly cried in a voice so sharp, so totally different to what she had ever heard him use before, that she was appalled. "Why did you keep talking as you did and not tell me my boy could prove himself innocent?—every minute precious as it is!"

"O, Mark," the frightened woman said deprecatingly, "don't you know that I began telling you when I came home, and—"

But as she spoke Crowley was gone from the house. He was gone to the lawyer's office to learn the full particulars of his wife's statement.

“At last—at last he’ll believe him innocent!” the poor mother said on her knees. “Pray God make his heart right ; make him know as I do, and as you know, O Lord, that our own dear boy is good, and pure, and true! Pray God spare our child to us for many years to come, and make us happy once more together!”

And the afflicted woman said her simple prayer to heaven, and found her simple heart comforted.

Crowley took a car and drove quickly to Mr. Scott’s office.

“What is this,” he asked, “I hear about a letter from Sydney?”

“Come into my private room and sit down, Mr. Crowley,” the lawyer said with exasperating coolness. And Crowley patiently did as he was told. Only one sign showed his absorbing agitation of mind—he did not remove his hat.

“The fact is that a certain Mr. Sinden, an acquaintance of the supposed murdered man has just written to the police, saying he met this very individual a week after the inquest was held on him.”

Had Crowley been any other man under the sun, he would have made some sign of the unspeakable joy this intelligence gave him. But he sat quiet and silent, his hat still on, and his hands on his knees. The lawyer continued :

“No doubt those very acute gentlemen, the detectives, in their laudable desire to get the lion’s share of the two hundred pound reward would have wished much to keep the receipt of Sinden’s letter secret. However, a gentleman, at the head of the police department gave me notice of the matter ; and it came to my ears just three hours ago. I at once telegraphed to Mr. Sinden, and here is his reply received just before you entered.

“Saw Chartres. Did not speak to him. He seemed not to wish it. Swear positively I saw him, dressed as digger. No doubt whatever.”

When Mr. Scott had finished reading this, the old man reverently took off his hat, and held it before his face.

The lawyer continued as if not heeding the action, “I shall write to Mr. Sinden to come to Melbourne by the next steamer ;

and it will be necessary to pay his expenses you know."

"How much, Sir?" The poor old father faltered, his hat still hiding his face.

"Say fifty pounds, Mr. Crowley, for the present," was the answer. And Mr. Scott at once left the room, as if for his cheque book.

When he came back, Crowley was seated calm as usual; and the cheque for the fifty pounds was given.

"And, now, I'll go see my boy," said Crowley, in his few words. "Good-bye, Sir."

"I fear, Mr. Crowley, you must wait until Friday to see him. The rules, you know."

"Yes; the rules. I forgot," the old man said, patiently, and speaking gently, where another in his circumstances would have made querulous complaint. "I suppose I must wait so long," and he sighed so plaintively, that Mr. Scott really felt deeply for him.

"But I can go and see your son, you know. I am his legal adviser, and always have access to him. How rejoiced the poor fellow will be to hear about this letter! I'll go and tell him of it now on the instant."

"Bless you, Sir. And Mr. Scott he is innocent! You believe him so now, don't you, Sir?" the father asked, while he searched every feature on the other's face, and watched his every movement.

"Certainly, I do. Most assuredly," the Lawyer said, without hesitation.

"I didn't like to ask you the question afore, Sir; but now—"

"Nor should I have cared to answer it before, Mr. Crowley."

"Thank you, Sir, thank you kindly," said poor Crowley, and then he went away.

And this is all the father said upon a question which he believed might determine the living or dying of his son. But no stranger to the man could believe what an aching heart he could carry under his cold exterior. Truly, Crowley was by nature a taciturn man; but he was like an almond—all his good qualities within.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was as long and weary a time to Mark Crowley, as to any other man, however impatient, to have to wait from Tuesday until Friday before seeing his son, but he made no complaint. Certainly he no longer feared for his son's life ; that utter misery was all over now. But yet his heart ached at the thought that he and Johnny might be for ever hereafter estranged. "I was wrong, I see now, Mary," he said, "that I didn't go to see him, but I should have gone ; I should have gone if the worst happened, you know. I wonder if he'll believe that? Yet I done it for the best, I done it for the best," he said dejectedly ; meaning that he acted according to the dictates of his offended pride. And what could his wife do, but try and comfort him ?

"I'll go in alone, Mary," he quietly said at the jail door, "I think I had best see him alone, my dear; for he's innocent now, I know; and I wouldn't like him to think that you or anybody had a hand in bringing us together again. His innocence has done that, and I'd like him to see it; he'll like it himself, mayhap."

And the anxious mother stayed out in the street, while her desponding husband went, with a breaking heart, to try and show his "boy" how he had all throughout loved him as he did now. Yet, he feared his errand was fruitless, and through this he was not nice in it. He would speak his mind, and say the whole truth, for he might as well.

"Johnny," he said, in a low though firm voice, as he shook his son's hand; "my best loved son. Eh, Johnny?"

"Please God, father, I am that. But it has gone very hard with me, that you of all the world, should have believed me a murderer," John said in a reproachful tone.

"I done what I thought best, Johnny. I spared no care, nor money for you, and what more could I do?"

"But you see *now*, father, how innocent I am?"

"I do, Johnny, I do; and you're my own son, again."

"Thank you, father—"

"I won't ask your pardon, Johnny; for no man should do that of his own child. But I thought I done right."

"You believed me a murderer, father."

"I looked at it in this way, Johnny. I thought it a hard thing that you should keep on driving a man to ruin,—and he once a friend—that had only a fair stand up fight with you, though you came off worst. You know best, Johnny, yourself, what cause you gave him to be angry against you. And, I looked on it since I learned the rights of the thing, that you ought to have forgiven and forgotten."

"And so it would have been, father, only for bad advisers," John said. Now this was not true. But people in defending themselves always say, and often believe, that they have done their best.

"When the poor fellow wrote to me, and gave me a full account of the matter, and

often the woman confessed she didn't rightly know what words passed between you, I saw the whole truth. He wrote me two or three times, and he didn't spare himself,—though he might have—and I believed him the more for it."

The son made no remark to this. He sat at the small table leaning his head upon his hand.

"You saw him after the quarrel, Johnny?"

"I did, father. I may say it now ; though I was advised not to confess it before."

"And what passed between you, Johnny?"

"What I'm ashamed in confessing now, father. But yet it had best be told. He met me that day he was missed, of all days in the year, met me I suppose by the accident that I happened to be travelling by his road. I came up with him—for I was on horseback—as he walked, and passed him without speaking. He called after me, and came running up—"

"And then you quarrelled again?"

"Nothing of the kind, father. He held out his hand, and asked to be friends ; but I wouldn't take it. He seemed very sad and miserable ; and said that for the sake of his

family he was willing to look over the past if I would only express my regret for my share in it. And he solemnly asserted that he never intended to injure me that day we quarrelled."

"And why didn't you take his friendly offer, Johnny? Why couldn't you say you were sorry for what you had done—for I take it, you are sorry?"

"I am, father, heaven knows ; and I would give much now, if I had made friends with him as he wanted."

"The man says you were quarrelling?"

"Then he says untruly, father. When I was pushing on, he laid his hand on the bridle and stopped me, while he said, 'Consider it for one minute more, Crowley. Better be friends than enemies.' And this is what that fellow called quarrelling, I suppose. Yet, why should I blame a stranger when my own relations condemned me unheard." Crowley said this last very bitterly.

"It was possible, Johnny ; it was possible I thought the devil might have tempted you to do it. I knew how much you hated him ever since you done him that first mischief ;

and when I saw you keeping on with your lawsuit against the poor man and his family, after he was ruined too, and heard your threats against him, I thought you was a changed lad. I never taught you otherways than to forgive and forget when you could ; and by your own words, did you do so at the last minute ?”

“ Well, father, thank God you believe in me now, at all events,” the son said in a gentle mood, “and I hope you will never have any cause to doubt me again.” And he went over and took his father’s hand.

This was the last straw on the camel’s back. Crowley’s composure broke down, and he cried heartily, with his hand on his son’s shoulder.

“ And after all, father dear,” said the young man, “I don’t know that I ought not to be the prouder of you. There was a man of the name of Brutus once, who ordered his own sons to be killed for the good of his country, as he believed ; and his name has been praised ever since, though it’s many a hundred years ago.”

“ Not like him, Johnny my boy. I’m not

such as he," said the old man, still crying. "I would die myself to save you, my boy. It was pride, Johnny—it was pride that overcame me. It was grief that our good name should be disgraced before the world. It was that as kept me away from you, Johnny. But I was working for you ; indeed I was, and—and—you can never know how I suffered ; no man can ever know that, Johnny dear !" The poor old father said all this in a broken voice. He fought with his emotion, even long after it had been conquered. His son stooped over him as he sat, and laid one arm round his shoulder, while the father still keeping his left hand on his son's neck, tried to conceal his tears by leaning his face upon his right hand. But the scalding drops fell thick and fast, fell upon the ground and lay there.

And father and son at this moment became again as of old.

John Crowley didn't speak again until he saw his father was calmer. Then after some serious talk as to what had really become of Chartres—for they spoke as if all the world knew he was alive—the time for visiting expired, and they parted.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE time passed, and the trial of John Crowley came on. The new and important evidence of young Sinden had already been whispered about; but it did not reach the general ear until after the examination of the witness. As to the accusation of the prisoner, we are fully acquainted with the strong points of that. Masham was called upon, and proved that his murdered friend had an artificial tooth, a left upper bicuspid, the shape of the gold plate upon which it was fitted was peculiar, and he had frequently had the curiosity to examine it. He had no doubt whatever that it had belonged to William Chartres.

The man who had last seen Crowley and Chartres together, gave his evidence as we

already know it, and it was not materially shaken in the cross-examination.

Then came the corroborative evidence as it was adroitly handled by the crown prosecutor, and we all know how this functionary can handle intangible things.

Truly, the crown prosecutor in two hours' speech of this sort appeared as anxious to procure a verdict, as the prisoner was to be acquitted. One would fancy that the prime aim of a law officer would be to see justice done, not to procure verdicts of guilty. But no doubt the Law knows best.

As a matter of policy, I am loth to give a full account of this memorable trial. Too many novelists have been before me in the court-houses, and criminal prosecutions are now stale to readers.

The prisoner of course made his defence, and I give a summary of it:—

Firstly, he insisted that no murder at all was proved; and he called up a black man as a witness, one of those whose services had been put into requisition after the finding of the remains. As far as tracks or physical signs went, this man and his coadjutors could

say nothing definitely, inasmuch as the crowd of people, who came upon the ashes of the murdered man, had "spoiled" the ground as far as native trackers are concerned. However, he stoutly affirmed his own ideas on the catastrophe.

"Whitefellow, die," he said, "whitefellow, fall down, die. Whitefellow, lie, one two week ; one two moon ; long a-time. Big rain come ; coborn waatare. Coborn waatare in gully. All timber—trees—much in waatare. Alagether, all big lump. Whitefellow alagether in big lump along a-trees. Hot a-weathare bush fire-a ; whitefellow burn along-a trees—alagether. Whitefellow roast, burn-a."

All this interpreted, meant that "the speaker was of opinion that a man might have died alone in the bush ; that in one of the usual wet season floods, both the body and the surrounding fallen timber might have been swept into a heap, and that an every day bush-fire might have done the rest."

His evidence was curious enough, but it went for what each hearer thought it was

worth, on account of the character of the shrewd giver. He, "King Billy," was a whiteheaded old drunkard, who though a fine stalwart chief, when Melbourne was founded, was now only a living jest going about with a dog-collar bearing his titles round his neck, and swearing that he was just going to marry the Queen.


And then the prisoner had to explain other apparently criminating facts. He really proved that his medical adviser had recommended him sea or mountain air, and showed how, in going to the new diggings he only took the place of his father, who himself had previously determined on going there to inspect the new reefs opened. How then was it that he had never fulfilled his mission? Simply because, directly he arrived on the ground, he heard enough against the mines to at once make him abandon all idea of embarking either his own or his father's capital in them. Several letters with their postmarks, to his father, substantiated this. Then, as to having been in Chartres' company? He had never thought of denying the fact. Being a

lawyer he had simply done what he would have advised others to do, and that was to reserve his defence until his trial. This silence of his had been commented upon and tortured so, that he was adjudged to have deemed what in reality he had never said one word about.

Why did he go to Sydney? As a part of his tour, and principally in order to have the opportunity of taking a sea-voyage home again. And here he produced letters to his father and mother, which supported these assertions.

And lastly, his counsel called up that witness upon whose credibility the fate of his client depended.

George Sinden. This young gentleman was now an accountant in one of the Sydney banks, and was well known and respected in Melbourne. He swore most positively that one afternoon, about eighteen or nineteen days after the date on which Chartres left his home, he distinctly saw William Chartres walking about the Botanic Gardens, Sydney, searching here and there the foliage of the various shrubs and plants, as a man



would when looking for insects. He was quite aware that Chartres was very fond of entomology, and he noticed him the more for his peculiar insect-hunting manner on this occasion. At first, as his friend was in a digger's dress, Sinden was doubtful about his identity ; however, he soon saw his face plainly, and walked up to speak to him, when the latter turned quickly away and left the Gardens. Sinden at this time had heard nothing of the supposed murder. He imagined that Chartres had come to New South Wales to try its goldfields, and that this day—being dressed in diggers' costume—he didn't care to be recognised. He never for a moment, after the second look, doubted that it was Chartres whom he had seen ; and in fact he told his mother on going home all about the meeting. No cross-examination could shake his evidence ; and after hearing it, nobody in the court doubted that he firmly believed every word he had uttered.

Ten minutes after the jury retired, they returned a verdict of "Not Guilty."

On what a thread a man's life may hang ! Had Sinden been a witness about whose word

a doubt could be entertained, nothing could have saved the life of the prisoner.

Did the public and the press indorse the verdict of the jury? Yes; so far as to declare that—since there was a doubt—it was right to have given the accused the benefit of it. But most people believed that John Sinden had been mistaken. It was to them evident enough that a murder had been committed, the black fellow's theory notwithstanding, and that the owner of that artificial left upper bicuspid tooth was William Chartres. Even the insurance company was so satisfied of this that they cheated the widow and orphans out of only two of the eight hundred pounds, and paid the balance over immediately.

"I am a marked and miserable man, father dear," groaned the unfortunate John Crowley, a few days after his release from prison. "Few people believe thoroughly in my innocence, and it would be better for me to die at once, than live in this misery."

"No, my son," his mother said hopefully, "you shall live many a long year to come, and live happy, too. Father and I have settled

the matter between us. Your work shall be to find the lost man, if so be he's alive. Yes, that's to be your work, my dear."

"To clear our name before the world, Johnny. And as far as every penny I have goes, I'll spare nothing."

"Dear father," said the son—he was an altered man, now—"Heaven bless you! Henceforth I devote myself to erasing the stain upon our name. God grant that I may be successful!"

Not long after this, John Crowley was in Sydney, searching with the aid of a well-paid detective for the missing William Chartres.

"There is five hundred pounds reward offered by the old man for finding him, as is said to be murdered," the detective told his mates, "and I believe it's no sham after all, from the way Crowley goes to work, and spares no money about the matter. He says he'll go out to California after that vessel you know of, if he doesn't hear anything by the end of the month; and I'm blest if I don't believe he will go, too."

CHAPTER XX.

POOR LUCY ! She hoped ; nothing could hinder her doing this—still hoped her husband was alive, still trusted that one day she might again see him. It was almost a cruel thing that she could not have been prevented from hearing of that evidence which had been given at the trial—what the black fellow had surmised, and the definite words of George Sinden. Neither father nor Edward Masham ever gave this evidence a moment's credence ; they, with nearly everybody else, looked upon it as a case of mistaken identity. But Lucy may be said to have been raised from death to life by the hopes aroused. By the time Crowley's trial came on, she was just recovering from that awful stupor of the mind which an indescribable grief causes, and which so many heart-broken widows know

so bitterly and so well. For some weeks after this, it was noticed that her new-born hopes had made her almost cheerful, in comparison to what it was expected she would be.

Had it not been for her father's almost peremptory commands, it is doubtful whether she would have put herself and her two children into mourning attire, such as befitted her and their sad condition. And these mistaken hopes were very beneficent in their action so far. But father feared for the coming time. He feared for the time when the weeks should become months, and the months should become years ; and when the long unsatisfied yearnings should be far, very far harder to bear than the ordinary grief, however great, of a widow for a beloved husband, mitigated by the healing hand of Time.

Often had William and Lucy talked about the possibility of one of them dying when far away from the other ; and many a time had they commented upon those long separations, so common in these days of emigration, where a husband or wife wrongly believes the beloved partner to be dead, and finds out the truth, after long and fruitless sorrow. Shortly

before William's parting from his wife, when he sailed from England to Australia, they had sadly spoken of the possibility of dying while absent from each other. They had spoken about those dreary mistakes which are sometimes made by those at home, concerning the life or death of a dear absent one.

"If you were to die, William? O, how should I know it, how could I be as sure of it as if I had seen you dead before me?"

"You could never be made as certain as that by any means which strangers could or would take to assure you," was William's answer. And then he spoke as only a man like himself could, and to a wife like his own. He could quite imagine himself committing the errors common to the rest of frail humanity. Here was his extraordinary peculiarity! I should like to know which of my readers can point out a man who possesses this god-like power.

"In my wanderings about Australia, about New Zealand, about the South-Sea Islands, people might lose sight of me for a long time, and give out that I was dead. Men of the same name as myself might be killed, or might

die a natural death among strangers to them, and thus it would perhaps come to your ears that you had lost me. Remember this, my darling, and don't be too readily assured that God has taken me from you."

"Thank you ; bless you, William, for those comforting words."

"We are very weak, my darling, all miserable weak uncertain creatures. Possibly I might become such a wretch as to cease to love you, and to wish that you should believe me dead."

"How, William—how could that be?" And Lucy nestled closer to her husband's side, and pressed her arm the tighter around him.

"We cannot discuss the 'how,' my wife. I only say it might be *possible*, as any wickedness is to any man—"

"Not to you—not to you, William!"

"Ah, yes, Lucy ; to me as to far far better men than I can ever hope to be. But listen. I know this about myself, at least, as well as any human being can know anything concerning his future state of mind ; I know that I could not live long without having your love,

without loving you. I mean that no matter in what circumstances I was placed, I could not remain long without trying to regain your affection, if I had been insane enough even to have thrown it aside."

"My darling! God reward you for that—for loving such an unworthy creature, as I know I am, for ever." And she laid her head on his shoulder.

"I am satisfied of what I say, Lucy. If I were wretch enough ever to desert you, I feel assured that one day, let it be months or let it be years—three, four, ten, twenty, my heart would at last return to its one pure first love."

"O, William!"

"Therefore, I say," and Chartres spoke earnestly; he feared that Lucy was treating this as one of their ordinary love-conversations, and was rather inclined to exercise her affection than her thought upon it. "Therefore, I say don't let a mere newspaper, a stranger's letter announcement of my death leave you hopeless. Hope to the last that I shall come back to you again. Wait for good proofs of my death before you believe it. Be

assured that if ever I am tempted to turn away from you, it must only be for a time. I must one day return to your arms if you will receive me, and never—”

And here a good fit of Lucy's sobbing broke the thread of this extraordinary conversation, and poor Lucy wept her eyes sore at the cold words, “if you will receive me.” Ah! truly, “the love of woman is a fearful thing!”

Lucy never forgot that conversation. Now she lived surrounded by the influence of it!

With all his argument, with all his proofs, all his persuasions, father could never bring her to confess in words that her husband was dead.

“I know—I feel he is living, and will yet come back to me,” were to the end her words.

And so she nourished her forlorn hopes.

As to father; he too had his sorrow to bear. For a month and more after his son's death, he seemed as if he were utterly crushed by grief. His sight again grew bad, and all his strong re-awaking energies appeared to have deserted him. But he remembered that

he was now the sole guardian of William's wife and children, and so made great efforts to keep from despairing. His enthusiasm in his invention aided him well in doing this, and he knew that if he succeeded his children would at once, and for life, be placed above all fears of that cruel want which had made his dear boy's life so different from what it might have been. He tried then hard to bear up; but time had to help him. At length he recovered his energy, and carried on his experiments. He and Lucy still remained at Drummond's.

And now occurred an event which would really go far to make many believe that the unfortunate Chartres really had been decreed by fate never to be successful himself, or to share in that of other men. A very short time after the trial, Edward Masham received a letter from a Melbourne solicitor, stating that he was the inheritor of fifteen hundred pounds a year, and upwards of two thousand pounds ready cash!

It appears that the first intimation of this fact had reached the colony upwards of

eighteen months before, while Masham was in Japan, when of course his whereabouts was unknown. Now, indeed, it was altogether to his unfortunate friend's disappearance that he owed the announcement of his good fortune ; for as a witness on the trial, his name had become well known, and then the lawyers soon found his address.

Drummond's station was not more than eighty miles from Melbourne ; and a few days after Masham's receipt of the solicitor's letter, he went in the mail-coach to see his friends. He found father in a shed hard at work on the carcass of a sheep.

"And how is the sight, Sir?" Ned asked.

"Wonderfully better, my dear lad. It is really extraordinary how it is improved. The doctors can't account for it. I can see now with my right eye almost well enough to read."

"You can see my face pretty well then, Sir?" Ned remarked, laughing, "and what do you think of it?"

"I was able to see it the last time we were together, Ned ; though now I can see it much more plainly."

"But what do you think of it, Sir?" Ned persisted.

"Handsome is that handsome does, my dear boy," father said, going back to his carcass. He couldn't say that poor Ned was beautiful. Nobody could say that. "Are you looking out for a wife, Ned, that you talk so much about your face?"

"No, Sir?" Masham answered, quietly, "I'm not doing that, and I fear can never venture to do it. But I want to know how my countenance would become a man with fifteen hundred a year?"

"How is that, Ned?"

"Well, Sir, the latest out is that I have come in for some money."


And then he told all about the matter.

Edward Masham was the second son of a superannuated Indian general, who when Edward was still a lad, retired to his small patrimony in Durham, and there leading the life of a recluse, he employed his ready capital and his savings in adding to his house and landed property. He soon became a veritable religious bigot, and not only did penance himself, but was fond of

compelling every one he could to follow his example. The eldest child was a daughter ; next to her was the heir Stephen, and lastly Edward. These children lost their mother when Ned was about thirteen years old ; and ever since that time, Edward led a miserable life while under his father's roof. When he and his brother left school, Stephen entered the university, his sister soon married Lord Ardham, a wealthy old man, and thus he was left alone with his father. He was destined for the Indian Civil Service, and he rebelled against his destiny. His idea of a civil servant was, that he must be an unhappy individual for ever chained to an office desk, and writing official documents, and of all labours in this world, Ned detested writing most. Here he was by no means uncommon. Some men cannot bear desk work. Many clever men who could become famous authors cannot rise because they will not write ; and many a promising lad enlists in the army or navy, in preference to undergoing the unvarying drudgery of writing and copying. This utter abhorrence of pen-work was the bugbear of Ned's boyhood, and at length his

home became so intolerable, that he made up his mind to get away from it by some means or another. He besought his father either to procure him a commission in the army, or to let him emigrate to America or Australia. But the father would hear of nothing against his own plans; and so poor Ned took the matter into his own hands.

He was allowed a little pocket-money after he was sixteen, and one day while the General was away in London, he asked the steward for twenty pounds, telling the untruth that his father had given him permission to do so. The steward appeared doubtful, whereupon Ned settled the matter by giving the man a receipt for six months' allowance in advance, and received ten pounds. And thereupon the unhappy boy set out for Liverpool, to go to sea. Here he found it impossible to get a ship, so he sold his watch and pin and other trinkets, and took a steerage passage to New Orleans where, he had heard, he could easily get a ship. However, on the voyage out he voluntarily worked on board so well, in order to qualify himself for a sailor, that the captain noticed




him and put him on the ship's articles. Thus Ned entered the confraternity of "blue-shirts." When he returned to England he wrote to his sister, Lady Ardham, giving an account of himself, and asking her to entreat his father's forgiveness and assistance. But the General had too much religion to pardon a sinner, and would have nothing to do with his "robber-son, a liar and a thief." However, the lad's brother-in-law helped him, and as Ned wished to remain at sea Ardham gave the necessary premium to a captain, and the lad went on his second voyage as midshipman. When we introduced him to our readers he was on his fourth voyage, and was a little over twenty years of age.

Between his trips he generally stayed with his sister, and thus it was that on his return from Melbourne, after his voyage with Chartres, Lucy had met him in his "shore-going dress," as he styled it. His father and he had never been reconciled, and the General dying just about the time Ned had left Melbourne for Japan, Stephen inherited the property, now worth about fifteen hundred pounds a year. Stephen, however,

did not, poor fellow, enjoy his property many months. He was killed in the hunting field, and Ned became his successor.

There was now a sum of two thousand three hundred pounds in the bank, this being the amount of a year and a half's rent, and Masham's Melbourne solicitor at once allowed his client to draw on him for five hundred pounds. And Ned was by no means slow in learning how to fill up cheques, and adopt a mode of signing his name consistent with the dignity of a man who has a banker.

When father and Ned entered the house, it didn't astonish Lucy to hear of Masham's change of circumstances. She had never doubted that he was a gentleman; but she was somewhat surprised at learning the very pardonable boyish peccadillo which had hitherto kept him from relating his history. It was very evident that that man's mind must be honourable who for years, and even to his most valued friends, could be hindered from the enjoyment of speaking about himself and his antecedents, by the dread of a mere boyish freak being known; father thought this at once.



Both he and Lucy, and Masham himself—their hearts smote them when they thought how very near William had been to help from his sorrows, and how happy they would now have all been, were he with them to share in his friend's success. It really did appear as if his destiny, to be unfortunate and to keep others so, had been as he many a time declared! Kind-hearted Ned, indeed, appeared to know what regrets Lucy felt now, and he rattled away in his talk to-day, as if he found it disagreeable to be a minute silent.


"And now, Sir," he said to father, "whenever you want cash to pursue your experiments, you know where your bank is. You must not touch your capital;" for poor William's money had been lent out on mortgage, at ten per cent. (the usual colonial interest). "If you succeed, why, then you must let me buy into the concern as a sleeping partner."

"And if I dont, Ned?"

"Then, Sir, we must only share the losses. As I am to have some benefit, if we be successful, it is of course only right that if we

fail, I should share in the failure," Masham gaily said.

After this Masham remained on a visit with Drummond for some days ; and during this time he, father, and their host had some serious conversation respecting this meat curing process of father's. About three months previous to William's death a few carcasses had been cured, and sufficient time had now passed to give them a fair trial. So Drummond invited some of the neighbouring squatters to his house ; the mutton and beef were tried under all conditions of cooking, and the company sang *jubilate* ! Yes ; father's experiments were successful, and now he, too, was a rich man !



CHAPTER XXI.

IMMEDIATELY upon the settlement of father's affairs, Masham left Australia. He had already stayed too long, and so he hastened home by the overland mail route.

Soon after this Lucy bade adieu to the land which she had come to poor, but was leaving rich; where she had arrived happy, but whence she was going in sorrow. Yet she still hoped; brooded daily and nightly on her hopes, and seemed as though living for one object, to see them realized. She believed that William still lived; that he had left her in order that she should get that eight hundred pounds insurance money, by which means father and she might be enabled to make a comfortable income, now that the former had his sight again. Before the remains were found, she believed William had committed

suicide ; afterwards Sinden's evidence had overturned this fear, for she never doubted that he had seen her husband in Sydney. William was living then, gone away from her until he should make some money, and if he were successful, he would one day surely return !

She lived as it were upon speculations of this kind, cherished them, loved them. Not a romance, not a newspaper paragraph, not a tale came before her in which a man was said to be missed, or wandering, or believed to have been killed, wherein she could not find something applicable to William's case. It is doubtful, indeed, whether father could have persuaded her to leave Australia, did she not believe that William had already left it for fear of discovery by the Insurance Company. After the trial, she anxiously desired to see Sinden ; but Masham hurried him back to Sydney, before she had an opportunity of calling on him. Then she wrote, asking him to give her all the information possible ; but through father's persuasion, Sinden sent her word that he had nothing else to add to what evidence he gave on the trial.



Unfortunately, too, it reached her that Crowley had devoted himself to finding her husband ; and unknown to her friends she corresponded with the old man, and got his promise to send her a regular account of his son's doings. By-and-by she learned that John Crowley believed William to have sailed in one of the two ships which left Sydney about a fortnight after he was missed. One of these vessels was bound for Valparaiso, the other to San Francisco ; and to the latter place Crowley determined to go. Now, Lucy herself felt sure that her husband had gone to America, though most probably to the southern part of it. He spoke Castilian as a native would, and it was not unlikely that he would make for a Spanish speaking community, and there pass for a native of Old Spain. Crowley was to go to San Francisco, why could not she go to Valparaiso ? And she implored father to allow her to do so, and he had much difficulty in showing her how helpless a woman must be in a search such as she proposed. Indeed, he made her consent to go to England, only by showing her how by living there—in

London—she really would be always in the centre of intelligence from all parts of the globe, where ships arrived from every port almost daily.

It was a pity that father did not go home by the way of Valparaiso. He could easily have done this, and thus for ever have set all Lucy's doubts at rest.

"Ah, my child," said father, "how happy I should be to know that you had given up all those dreary hopes that William is alive!"

"Dreary, papa! If it were not for those very hopes I am sure that I should not be long with you. I live to see William again; and when I do believe he is dead, I shall try and die too," Lucy said firmly.

Of course her altered circumstances made some impression on her. No one under any pressure of grief, not very recent, can help being pleased at a rise in station. Lucy now for the first time in her life had her own attendant, and experienced the pleasure of having money to spare. No accommodation on board ship that wealth could procure was wanting to her. She took special pride in those treasures—her children—left to her.


Night and morning she helped their maid with their toilette, and in the daytime she instructed, and worked at her needle for them. They were always patterns of neatness, and, indeed, patterns for other children in their manners. Like their mother, they too had a gentle and inobtrusive way with them, that charmed many a mother's heart.

Her sad history created much sympathy for her on board, and as she would sit for hours at a time, her children close round her, and her work in her hand, she looked as beautiful a picture of sacred matronhood as ever painter put on canvas. Her ways were now even more gentle than before; they were subdued too as those of a sufferer under a great sorrow. Often did the rough sailors watch her, as she sat now quietly smiling at her children, now resting a moment with her hands crossed before her and her sorrowful eyes raised to heaven.

"She's a sweet creature, poor thing!" one sailor remarked, "she's thinking of her husband now, mayhap. I know she is; for there she has the little one beside her, bending over him."

There were many hearty, noisy, returning diggers on board, and in the chief cabin too ; and not one of them who did not speak the more quietly and heedfully when the gentle young widow was near him.

It was a favourite evening custom of Lucy's to take Captain Howe's proffered arm, and walk the deck sometimes for an hour at a time. And what was the usual topic of conversation? The vicissitudes of life—especially at sea—and the captain's experiences in all countries. This always led up to Lucy's confessing her hopes that her husband still lived. And here, making her confession to a stranger—she had at first a great difficulty to get over—the fear lest the captain should, in believing her views, also believe that her husband had not loved her. So she always spoke as if she knew that William's troubles must have somewhat affected his mind, yet not sufficiently so to hinder his acting independently, or for what he thought her after-good. A hundred times did Lucy ask the Captain concerning the exact route across the waters between Sydney and Valparaiso ; and two or three times he



got his chart and showed it to her, even carefully marking it off with a pencil, so that she might understand it the better. Thousands of islands lay in the route, and from this fact Lucy would derive additional length of vitality to her hopes. Father had, at her request, written to the British consuls at various western South American sea-ports, and did they fail to give him any intelligence of William, even then she felt she need not despair. Might he not have landed on one of these Pacific islands? Might he not have been wrecked on one of them, and remain, perhaps for years, in ignorance of what had occurred in Australia since his leaving it? But yet one day he would be restored to those who loved him! O yes; that would surely come to pass. That thrice happy fact would Lucy gather out of each chain of her reasonings—wishes rather than reasonings. And the three or four tales that the Captain thoughtfully told her concerning missing men, who had again been joined to their friends, these she laid down firmly among the foundations of that edifice

of Hope under whose shadow alone her life itself seemed to be tolerable.

The poor widow, in the present state of mind, had as bad an adviser in Captain Howe as she could well have found. Like many a man in a higher station in life, he could reason with facts, but he could not with fancies. He was, moreover, what is commonly called soft-hearted, and like all sailors, more or less superstitious. Good a seaman as he was, he was a very poor adviser, for like Goldsmith's "people," he was generally of opinion with the last speaker; consequently, he fanned Lucy's hopes or depressed them, according as he now credited her wild views, now followed father's sober *résumé* of the evidence. Unfortunately he knew of two or three cases, something such as Robinson Crusoe's was, and he was so thoughtless as to add these to Lucy's stock of real "romances," which was already large enough. It is certain, that whether he intended it or not, he aroused new hopes in Mrs. Chartres which seemed too strong ever to be destroyed. He also promised, since he was pretty sure that his

next voyage would be to South America, to use all his endeavours to find whether Chartres had reached that country.

His wife was a nice ladylike woman, the daughter of a retired commander in the Navy, and Lucy made her acquaintance in London, with what cruel results will afterwards be told.

"England, O!" Not the white cliffs, but the light on the Lizard, just after dark on a lovely quiet evening in June. The second officer sang out the cheerful intelligence; and the sailors laughed and the passengers cheered.

Lucy heard the cheering. She went on the poop to see the welcome light; then she recollected the last time she had beheld it, and her tears soon hid it from her sight. She came on deck no more that evening. Father knew why; and he came down and sat beside her. The excitement of the passengers was so great, that they were left alone in the saloon; and father and daughter wept.

"Would to God, my child, it had been I who was gone, and not my dear boy!" he said.

What could Lucy say to this; but "Oh, papa dear, neither—neither of you! He is

alive yet, and we shall see him once more."

"My child, God truly knows that to make that possible, I would gladly resign all my prospects of wealth, and live in poverty all my days."

People thought that the successful Mr. Chartres, whom all the colony had declared to be one of the most fortunate speculators of the day, ought to be happy indeed. They little knew the blight the loss of his only son had cast over his life!

Father telegraphed to Masham from Gravesend; and he was at the railway-station to meet his friends. They put up at Morley's Hotel, and as far as money was concerned, their first evening in London was very different to the last. But the perception of this seemed to give poor Lucy much pain. Her great sadness all that evening could easily be thus accounted for.

Masham was much concerned at finding her hopes that William was living, still as strong as ever. He had expected that the excitements of the voyage, and the change of faces and scenery, would have brought about a more reasonable state of mind.

"We can do nothing, Ned, for her, until that fellow Crowley chooses to write whatever he thinks proper from America. And I have but too good reason to fear that in order to make himself appear really innocent, he will assert that he has had intelligence of my boy."

"Then you no longer have any doubts in Crowley's favour, Sir?"

"Perhaps, Ned, I have just now spoken rather rashly," father answered. "But I can no more say that I believe the man to be innocent, than I should venture to assert he is guilty. My boy has been murdered, that is all I can affirm."

"And you believe Crowley knows more than he dares tell, Sir?"

"I can't say that either, Ned. But one thing I can say, and that is, that he persecuted William to the last ; and did I believe him innocent as you are of the murder, I can never forget that against him."

"I abhor the fellow," Masham said, fiercely. Ned could never hear his name in patience after that insult offered to Lucy. "If he writes to Mrs. Chartres to say he has

heard any tidings of William, why then one of us must only follow him up at once and see to the grounds of his statement. He is playing a winning game, and knows it too."

"How, Ned? It is certainly an expensive one."

"Pshaw, sir! What are a few hundreds to his father? The fellow had no hope of being able latterly to earn a livelihood in Australia; and his pretended search has given him a golden excuse for leaving the country. Every doubt he can manage to raise about poor William having been murdered will elevate him in public estimation; and even when he gives up the swindling search, he will be said to have spent much money, and altogether to have done his best to show his innocence to all the world."

"Just so, Ned. But I don't think the old folk are in the cheat."

"I can't say, Sir," said Masham, stamping his foot fiercely. He detested Crowley, and all connected with him too bitterly to reason much where his enemy was concerned. "I can't say, Sir. But this I know that villain is meanwhile keeping up false hopes; break-

ing the hearts of others—wasting, I mean, *her* existence !”


At the railway station that afternoon, when Masham had taken Lucy’s hand, and seen the gentle, pale, face—paler now amidst the dark drapery—smile and flush with pleasure at meeting the dear and tried friend, he thought bitterly : “ That smile might have been brighter still, and the flush on her sweet face might have been a blush for me, if that thrice accursed villain Crowley had met his deserts ! And this villainy is almost as bad as his first, for he is now murdering her !”

In a few weeks the first shipment of Australian meat, cured by father’s process, arrived in London. The far-seeing colonists had never doubted his success, and their belief was soon assured. All the meat sold at once, and the venture was a thorough mercantile triumph. Father’s per centage, as agent, amounted to no less than three hundred pounds on the first shipment. And this is not all ; for we may as well here give a summary of the effects of father’s successful experiments. Within three years of his leaving Australia, several South American

companies had been formed who used his patent. Each of these, as well as the original Australian one, made him its agent, and gave him not only a per centage on all sales, but of course many shares in the undertaking. Incredible as it may appear to readers who have no idea of the effects of trade, father's income from all sources amounted in six years to no less than seven thousand a-year. The name of "Chartres and Company" was reinstated in its old seat of honour. Father paid off all the debts of the former firm, with *compound* interest added, and he was now one of the merchant princes of the world. Every year too his income kept steadily increasing.

Now in all this there is nothing whatever wonderful. The true diamond mine now-a-days is a useful invention; always providing that the inventor has a few hundreds in his pocket to pay for his patents.

As soon as father's first shipment was disposed of, he left "Morley's." Took a house near Chelsea, and an office in the City; and the former he furnished with every luxury money could procure. All his wealth now was devoted to the endeavours to make Lucy happy.




CHAPTER XXII.

TWELVE months have passed away, and father was in the full tide of his commercial success.

Masham's sister, Lady Ardham, and Lucy Chartres were much attached to each other. Fanny had all the unselfish, kindly ways of her brother, and few who knew her could help liking her. She was very much older than Edward and, indeed, was now long past that grand climacteric of Englishwomen—forty. Strange to say, too, she had already become quite aware of the fact that her personal attractions were on the wane. She had sense enough to know this, and what is more uncommon still in her sphere of life, to act upon her knowledge. She was no Mrs. Skewton, Edith Dombey's mamma ; and yet she had made strong enough efforts to put

off her so-considered fall for a few years. However, some months before her acquaintance with Lucy Chartres, she had suffered a severe fit of illness, which set its seal upon her for life. When she left her bed her colour wouldn't come again, her skin wouldn't fill out, her hair would not grow as of old, nor did her eyes become as clear ; and seeing all this, poor Fanny was fain to give up the ghost at once—and she no longer attempted to play the rôle of Perfect Beauty

A woman to be a woman, must believe in herself ; and this is just what Fanny did. But she didn't make a fool of herself, as so many of her seniors did. She, in fact, ceased to act as a girl—the young creature of perfect beauty, whom to behold is to worship. She now took upon her the rôle of the intelligent matron, and exceedingly well it became her. Now Lucy Chartres, with her sweet face and her sad history, was just the very person with whom she could best put herself forward. Lucy being so very lovely would act as a “draw” for her, and yet she would arouse no jealousy. She was a widow, it is true, but still she was quite out of the



matrimonial market. As she was young and unknown she must have a chaperon ; and so Fanny constituted herself her guardian. She liked Lucy, moreover, as much as one woman can really like another ; and, indeed, soon began to act the part of elder sister. Her sagacity in her choice of a friend soon became apparent. Lucy attracted the audiences, while Fanny helped to entertain them, and thus the latter had some share in all the *éclat* connected with a beautiful woman.

And thus, Fanny introducing and urging her, Lucy Chartres soon became engaged during the season, for the orthodox six weeks in advance.

Could any woman, and she a pretty and attractive one, too, be otherwise than happy, when like Lucy she was a cynosure of eyes every evening during the season ; and when on her continental trip with Fanny and her party, she had the homage and choicest *æillades* of Barons and Counts, who saw what a charming young English widow she was, " the most beautiful, *mon ami*, and of the gravest, *mon cher*, having also a *dot* of no less than twenty thousand pounds !" And, indeed,

Lucy was happy—happy in her own way ; at least she was far from being miserable. What the world could afford of beauty, companionship, and wealth, she now possessed ; all she lacked was the one unpurchaseable thing—Love, to make her entirely contented. And yet, no ; for had she not this Love already fixed in her heart—her love for her husband.

Somebody asked her one day, when her party was wandering on the beach at Castellamere, and when the questioner was poking holes in the sand with her parasol, “How is it, my dear, that you never seem *ennuyée* ? I can’t make it out.”

“How do you know I never am ?” was the smiling counter question.

“Because I see it ; and besides everybody remarks the same of you,” her young companion returned, wiping the lazy tear of a long gape off her cheek—it was a very young cheek, too.

“I don’t know, my dear,” Lucy said gently, “I suppose it is because I am always thinking of something or other.”

“And what is that interesting ‘something or other’ ? Do tell me,” said Bertha, with

her usual girlish curiosity. "There you are, self-possessed as usual, and walking along with that calm and pensive expression of yours! Tell me this 'something or other,' dear. Ah, me! I suppose I shall know what it is when I fall in love." And here the young lady brightened considerably.

"I suppose it is my way of being thoughtful, Bertha," Lucy remarked.

"But that is only nonsense!" Bertha said. "Now, Lucy, do tell me; is that the way you looked—always so grave, when you were in love? Come over to this sandbank and sit down, and tell poor me all about this sublime feeling—this Love." And Bertha led the way. Lucy followed her.

When they were seated, Bertha looked round into her companion's face. Lucy's large gentle eyes were welling over with tears.

The young girl saw this and was much affected. She recollected.

"O, Lucy darling, do forgive me. I had forgotten. O, how foolish I have been!" She recollected that sad tale of hopeless love which everybody knew.

Lucy took the offered hand and pressed it. They both cried.

"Ah, Lucy, how you must have loved him!" said the girl of eighteen, passionately.

"Not more than I still love him, dear," were the calm words.

And that day the young girl felt no more ennui. She heard the history of her friend's affection, and thought upon it that time and long afterwards.

Yes. Bertha had spoken truly enough when she talked about Lucy's calm ways, her gentle smile, and her thoughtful mood. Lucy was a living poem. She was a *religieuse* whose soul-dreams and hopes were inspired by Love. If she no longer cherished any belief that her husband would again come to her, I do not think she would have clung to his memory any the less strongly, or ever have been the nearer to becoming a wife again. All her soul was unalterably fixed on her love; she lived in it, and moved in it. It gave her pain, it gave her joy, tinged her every feeling with its colours, and filled her very existence.

As a Buddhist devotee breathes, sur-

rounded by the aura of his god's power and influence, so this faithful wife lived, enveloped by her Love. She had her ecstasies too, divine joys, engendered in a heart conscious of acting faithfully to the last. She had the consolation of knowing that she was doing as the whole world approved of, what in old times women were especially honoured for doing, and above all what William must here or hereafter learn—loving her husband, remaining his alone, till death. “Yes,” she would think, “if he be no longer in this world, he now knows how I love him. And if he be alive, and die before I come to him, he will know it all the same.” She had chosen her part—through hopes that were perhaps false; but having chosen it, she would act it out to the last. She steadfastly believed in an immortal life hereafter. William must learn all, some time—perhaps in this world, assuredly in the next!

Now to affirm that Lucy did not enjoy her many little womanly triumphs in society, and the many new pleasures which wealth afforded her, would not be correct. She was by nature as fond of admiration as any

woman, pretty or ugly, usually is. She enjoyed her triumphs then, though they were always alloyed with pain—a pain, still a sad sweet one.

Though she was the wife and daughter of gentlemen, yet hitherto she had experienced none of those pleasures which what is called society invariably affords women. It had been her lot to pass through the brightest part of her youth unknown to the world, and unseen by many who could value her: not that she, having her dear husband beside her, had ever thought of repining at this; but yet it was so. Now, however, she had wealth, and station, and moved among all the best people of the world, and she could not shut her eyes to all the comforts of the one, and the many triumphs—for she was much sought after—of the other.

But all her joys were mingled with sorrow. “Ah, if William were with me now!” that was the constant cry of her heart. And she thought of all the sufferings he had undergone, all the old days of hard work and poverty that he had experienced. Sometimes she felt as if her heart must break when she

dwelt on those sad days. "And for my darling to be gone away now from all our prosperity, to be lost to us just as our bright days are come!"

Ah, would she ever see his dear face again! And as she looked round on her charming rooms, her furniture, her articles of *bijouterie*, the gems of painting and statuary her father had bought for her, saw her own, and her dear children's rich clothing, her carriages and horses, her choice books and musical instruments, her heart would swell to bursting at the thought that her husband might have been amid them now, but was not. Every group of clever men who stood round her, charmed by her beauty and goodness, these she knew would have formed the proper companions for her husband. He would have shone even among them, and her attractions would also have been his joy.

She lived in her silent grief. When first she had gone to the continent it was with Fanny. How her heart smote her for enjoying her new existence without her husband. If he were here now! If he could see the cities, the countries, the works of art; mix

with the happy people, see the delightful views; walk with her by his side among the glorious ruins of the past! If she could hear his dear voice explaining all these things to her, sit with her hand in his by the Italian seas at sunset, and sing with him the sweet verses of Petrarch and Guarini! If these things were—if they were! But alas, could they ever be? would she ever again in this world be with him? should she ever more hear the loving tones of his voice?

She could not answer. But she hoped.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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